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THE CHRISTIAN LIFE AND THE SPIRITUAL LIFE

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Catholic Library of Religious Knowledge

XVI

The Christian Life and The Spiritual Life

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY OF ASCETICAL AND MYSTICAL THEOLOGY

BY

V. E. MASSON, O.P.

TRANSLATED BY
SR. M. HYACINTH, O.P.

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PREFACE

MUCH has been written during recent years on the subject we are about to approach. The spiritual life, under its many aspects, has been set forth, both in general outlines and in detailed studies and in discussions which have caused some stir. Theologians of note have been obliged to throw light on certain corners which writers of a past day left in the shade.

The pages which we offer the readers of the "Catholic Library of Religious Knowledge" have no such aim. This is not a work of controversy; on the contrary it seeks to preserve and to reflect the peace and tranquillity of that spiritual life of which it treats.

Nor is this a new treatise on ascetical and mystical theology; the limitations of space would not permit us to attempt so great a task. Our aim is more modest; it is merely to give a short and simple "Introduction." We have tried to group together by way of synthesis those questions of which some knowledge is necessary if we are to undertake with any profit the study of ascetical and mystical theology.

In every science it is necessary to begin with

definitions. The end of ascetical and mystical theology is to treat of the spiritual life and of perfection. What is this life? What are its laws and the normal cause of its development? The soul itself is evidently the worker, but not the only or even the principal one. Left to herself she is powerless in that supernatural world where everything hides itself from her search and eludes her grasp. Who shall guide her thither and keep her there? Thence arises the whole question of divine co-operation in the origin and growth of our spiritual life.

We have thought it best to group together a number of answers to all these questions, for they form a sort of general theory of the spiritual life. The ideas we are about to enlarge upon are usually dealt with very briefly in ascetical and mystical treatises, so that it is difficult to grasp their connection one with another. Placed side by side, or better still, arranged in logical sequence, they stand out more clearly, hold the attention more firmly and are more easily impressed on the memory.

It is clear from this, however, that nothing new or original is to be expected here. Most of these questions have already attracted the attention of theologians, who have given us complete and often very learned treatises on them. We have made free use of these studies and have endeavoured to reproduce them faithfully, and to present a synthesis of the doctrines most usually accepted. The numerous references we have given indicate to the

reader the sources from which fuller information on the various subjects may be obtained.

The spiritual life being the perfection of the Christian life, we shall first deal with this latter and consider its general plan. We shall then set forth the exact idea of the spiritual life, of which we shall study the laws and development. (Part I.)

Then, under the general title of workers in the spiritual life, we shall examine successively the place held in it by God—by Jesus Christ—by the Blessed Virgin—by the Holy Ghost; and we shall end by a few remarks on the subject of direction as the principal aid to the soul in its progress towards perfection.

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PART I

THE CHRISTIAN LIFE AND THE SPIRITUAL LIFE

OR

THE PERFECTION OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

PRELIMINARY

OBJECT OF ASCETICAL AND MYSTICAL THEOLOGY

In a general sense, theology is the science which treats of God: in its wider meaning it includes all that relates to God.

It is called Natural Theology, or Theodicy, if it seeks to know God by the sole light of human reason; it is called Supernatural when it is founded on revelation and by an examination of its nature draws thence conclusions regarding the truths of faith.

Supernatural theology is, in its turn, divided into dogmatic and moral theology. The first treats of revealed mysteries, of the sacraments and of the future life; the second of human acts, of the precepts, of the counsels, of grace, of the Christian virtues, of the gifts of the Holy Ghost; in a word, of all the principles tending to that supernatural end made known to us by faith.

These two, however, are not distinct sciences, independent of one another, without relation or bond of union. Theology, or the sacred science, is absolutely one, eminently speculative and practical —but more speculative than practical—even as the science of God from whom it is derived.[1]

[1] Human theology does not contain within itself its own principles. It borrows them from the theology in heaven, that is from the knowledge that God has of Himself and which the

It is clear that in moral theology such as we have defined it are found the principles necessary to guide souls to the highest perfection, and that ascetical and mystical theology are nothing more than the application of this great moral theology to the direction of souls towards closer union with God. It takes for granted all that the sacred science teaches regarding the nature and properties of the Christian virtues and of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and it studies the *laws and conditions of their growth in view of perfection.*

On this study, therefore, converges all the light of dogmatic and moral theology, of which it (ascetical and mystical theology) is the crown and highest application. And thus is completed the cycle formed by the different parts of theology, whose perfect unity becomes more and more apparent.[2]

This idea perfectly corresponds both with the ordinary and the etymological sense of the words *ascetical* and *mystical.*

Ascetical theology or the science of the ascèse (from a Greek word employed by the Fathers of the first centuries to signify the struggles and efforts of the Christian soul against all which is opposed to the practice of virtue or of perfection both within and around her) is nothing else but that theological science which has for its aim the direction of souls in the struggle against sin and in the progress towards virtue.

blessed have of God. These principles are given to human theology by revelation. This is why human theology in relation to the theology in heaven is said to be a subalternate science. No one better than S. Thomas has shown the organic unity of theological science. Cf. P. Pèques, *La Somme en Forme de Catéchisme pour tous les Fidèles,* p. xix *sqq.*

[2] P. Garrigou-Lagrange, *Perfection Chrétienne et Contemplation,* Vol. I, p. 3, 1st edition.

Mystical theology, as its name indicates, treats of more hidden and mysterious subjects; of the intimate union of the soul with God; of the transitory phenomena which accompany certain degrees of this union, such as ecstasy, and lastly of those graces which are extraordinary, such as visions and private revelations.

By the aid of these definitions it is easy to determine exactly the *object* of ascetical and mystical theology: it is Christian perfection, union with God, the contemplation which this supposes, the ordinary means which lead to it and the extraordinary helps which accompany it. It is, in fact, the science which has for its aim the leading of the soul in the way of perfection unto the union with God enjoyed by the perfect.[3]

But when we speak of perfection and the perfect, we must first suppose something which is capable of being perfected; and in the present matter it is that state of soul which serves, in a certain way, as a point of departure for that perfecting progress which is the ascetical and mystical life, or in one word *the spiritual life*.

This point of departure, this primitive state of the soul is the Christian life of which the spiritual life is only a more perfect form. But the Christian life is essentially based on sacrifice: "Whoso doth not carry his cross and come after Me cannot be my disciple." It would be useless to dream of a Christian life which was only vaguely inspired by the thought of Christ, without imitating His example.

The perfection of the Christian life, that is, the

[3] Cf. P. Garrigou-Lagrange, *op. cit.*, pp. 1-6.

spiritual life, consists in the closeness of this imitation.

Is this impossible? No. Is it difficult? No, although it may appear so at first sight. For it is what God wills for our souls, and God does not command the impossible, or what comes to much the same thing, the very difficult. "You have received of us," writes S. Paul to the Thessalonians, "how you ought to walk and to please God, so also you would walk that you may abound the more. For you know what precepts I have given to you by the Lord Jesus. For this is the will of God, even your sanctification." (1 *Thess.* iv. 1-3.)

Our sanctification then is the will of our Lord, and the apostle bids all to progress more and more in this way of sanctity. Therefore it is clear that this is not a height only to be attained by a few privileged souls. The Lord stands on this height and to all the world He calls: "Come ye all unto Me." And we can apply to this call what S. Teresa says of contemplation: "Behold the Lord invites everyone. That is the very truth, therefore the matter is beyond doubt. If the feast were not for all, He would not call all. Yet He says without restriction: 'Come all ye.'" (*Chem. de la Perfect*, Ch. XX, trad. Bouix.)

"The spiritual life is perfectly homogeneous. It begins, it increases and develops, and in its various stages it manifests doubtless distinctive characters, but nevertheless within them all is to be found the same seed of divine grace. At the beginning, the supernatural seed fecundates the soul, introducing therein the infused virtues and the gifts of the Holy Spirit; thence the soul is more ready to receive and to profit by the divine illuminations and inspirations,

for she begins to bring forth fruit spiritual and savoury such as is most acceptable to God; thus is the soul lead on to the enjoyment of divine delights in mystical contemplation."[4]

[4] Meynard-Gerest, *Traité de la Vie Intérieure*, preface, VII.

CHAPTER I

THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

I. Nature of the Christian life: communication of the divine life: eternal life already begun. II. Plan of the Christian life: (*a*) its principle, grace; (*b*) its faculties, the infused virtues and the gifts of the Holy Ghost.

I. Nature of the Christian Life

The Christian life may be defined as the life of God within us. This definition is exact, provided all trace of Pantheism is excluded.

The Christian life, says P. Gardeil,[1] is the divine life; that is to say, the life which God Himself lives, communicated to man, adapted to his powers, and as such, namely as divine, lived by man.

But what is this intimate life of God which is communicated to us? Although all is one in God, except the distinction which arises from the relations of the Persons, we who are incapable of grasping and of expressing the perfect unity of God, can nevertheless consider His life under various aspects. Thus there is the life of God as Creator, the life of God as Preserver and Legislator. Clearly it is none of these lives which are communicated to us, but

[1] *Vie Spirituelle*, November, 1919, for all this chapter.

one still more intimate and profound, the life of God as He is in Himself, the life which is His beatitude, His life of perfect being. In Him perfection attains its perfect end. He possesses in Himself as in its source the Supreme Good. In order to be happy He has but to contemplate Himself with a perfect vision, and to love Himself with an infinite love. This life of God consists in the beatitude of contemplation and love of Himself.[2]

But this is not His whole life; because, in God, knowledge and love are fruitful, and the term of this fruitfulness is the mystery of the Blessed Trinity, or the mystery of the intimate life of God as revealed to us by our Lord Jesus Christ. God contemplates from all eternity His own sovereign perfection, and in contemplating Himself He begets His Son; from all eternity the Son contemplates the perfection of the Father. The Father and Son love one another infinitely and eternally; and in this mutual act of love, according to the law of fecundity, which is the law of perfect life, springs forth, as its fruit, the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity, the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit also contemplates the Father and the Son; and in this union of knowledge and of love of the infinitely Perfect, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are infinitely happy.

Such is the profound and intimate life of God.

Communication of the Divine Life.—This life God deigns to communicate to the creature ready to receive it; that is, the creature endowed with knowledge and love capable of knowing the Infinitely

[2] S. Thomas defines beatitude or happiness: "the perfect good of an intellectual nature." (*Summ. Theol.*, I, q. 26, art. 1.)

Perfect and of loving the Sovereign Good; therefore to angels and to men.

But He makes this communication in some sort gradually, for it is accomplished in two stages. In the superior degree, it is the life of beatitude, or eternal life in its full development; in the inferior degree, it is the Christian life.

The Christian life is, in short, nothing but the apprenticeship for the life of the blessed, eternal life already commenced, though in an imperfect way. "He that believeth in the Son hath life everlasting" (*John* xxxvi; v. 24; vi. 40-47; vi. 55): not merely will have it later on if he perseveres, but he has it already in a certain sense, because the life of grace here below is the beginning of eternal life, *inchoatio vitæ æternæ*. This is the teaching of S. Thomas in his commentary on *S. John* vi. 47:[3] "Christ is in us in a twofold way: in our intelligence by faith, and in our heart by charity which informs faith. He, then, who believes in Christ in such wise that he draws near to Him, possesses Him already in his heart and his intelligence. If we add that Christ *is* eternal life (1 *John* v. 20; i. 4) we may conclude that whosoever believes in Christ *has* eternal life; he possesses it already in its principle, and in hope."

Again S. Thomas, speaking of grace, says: "Grace is nothing else but a certain beginning of glory in us."[4] And as the seed can only be known by the plant which springs from it, or the dawn by the day which succeeds it, so we can only fully know

[3] *Comm. S. John* vi. 47: "Amen, amen, I say unto you: he that believeth in Me hath everlasting life."

[4] *Summ. Theol.*, IIa, IIae, q. 24, a. 3, ad. 2m; IIa, IIae, q. 69a, 2ae. Veritate, q. 14, a. 2.

the life of grace by considering first the glory of which it is the germ: *gratia est semen gloriæ*.[5]

For this reason, before speaking of the Christian life, we must consider in what consists that eternal beatitude of which it is the prelude.

A. Beatitude, i.e., eternal life in its fullness.

S. John describes it thus: "Dearly beloved, we are now the sons of God, and it hath not yet appeared what we shall be. We know that when he shall appear we shall be like to him, because we shall see him as he is" (1 *John* iii. 2). S. Paul adds: "We see (God) now through a glass in a dark manner, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know even as I am known" (1 *Cor* xiii. 12). Which means that we shall see God immediately, as He is in Himself, without veil or intermediary, "Who inhabiteth light inaccessible" (1 *Tim.* vi. 16).

In view of these very clear texts from the Holy Scripture, Pope Benedict XII has laid down that "in heaven the souls of the blessed enjoy an intuitive and face-to-face vision of the Divine Essence, without the intermediary of any creature heretofore known: the Divine Essence reveals itself unveiled, in perfect light, and these blessed souls enjoy it always and for all eternity."[6] This shows that the object of the intimate life of God becomes the object also of the life of the blessed; they know and love God even as He knows and loves Himself just as He is. They see Him, and by this vision are assimilated to His essence and therefore to His

[5] Garrigou-Lagrange, *op. cit.*, I, 132.

[6] *Constit.*, Benedictus Deus, January 29th, 1336, Denz. LXVII. No. 530.

essence in its perfection; and also to the intimate life of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

Of course these souls do not fully comprehend God, because the Infinite alone can comprehend the Infinite; moreover their intelligence, though beatified, always remains finite; but they see Him as the Church has defined it, without any intermediary, even more clearly than, here on earth, we see with our bodily eyes the person to whom we are speaking. So clearly that the horizon of this intellectual life is exactly the same as that of God in His beatitude.

This power of penetration and extent of view on the part of the blessed is explained by the *light of glory*, which is nothing else than the participation, or the communication made by God to His elect of His own intellectual light: "In Thy light we shall see light."[7] So much for the vision.

Love demands union, and given love, joy follows. Already we are ravished with the divine perfections which we see in creatures; what will it be like when we shall see God Himself, the perfect exemplar of all perfection? How can we express the love and joy which will thrill the beatified soul at such a vision? *I shall be satisfied when Thy glory shall appear* (*Ps.* xvi. 15). It will be a love composed of admiration, reverence, gratitude, and above all of friendship, with a simplicity and a depth of intimacy such as no human love can ever attain.

But whilst for this vision God must intervene to enlighten the sight of the blessed by His own light, on earth this intervention is not necessary for love of Him. Already here on earth the just man possesses divine love, and this love will accompany

[7] Cf. *On the Perfection and Privileges of the Beatific Vision of Garrigou-Lagrange, op. cit.*, pp. 134-135.

him even to heaven, a love identically the same, because charity never dies. But there it becomes more intense, more beautiful, it is true, but that is the only difference.

Nor is this all. Likened unto God, the beatified soul sees Him and loves Him, and enters into His intimacy; but it penetrates even farther still: it participates in the very life of the Blessed Trinity Itself, and becomes in some sort actively associated with this mystery. By its vision of the Divine Essence, it is vitally associated to the generation of the Word, because the object of its act of knowledge is God Himself. By its love it associates itself closely to the procession of the Holy Spirit, because the reality which its act of love enfolds is the Sovereign Good, that is to say, God Himself, but God as the end of love. This means that in the blessed the Father begets His Word, the Father and the Son together breathe forth Love. Charity unites them to the Holy Ghost, the Beatific Vision renders them like to the Word, and unites them to the Father Whose Image He is. In each one of them the whole Trinity dwells, known and loved as in a living tabernacle: so that the elect belong truly to the family of God, and, absorbed in Him, they live, in very truth, though in the plane of creatures, the Divine life.

It is evident that this life is only possible if God, in some way, deifies the beatified soul. In the natural order, man is only capable of intellectual knowledge and of an enlightened love, superior to sensible love, because he has received a spiritual soul; in the same way we shall be capable of a Divine knowledge and a supernatural love only if we have received some participation of the very nature of

God; if our soul has been in a sense deified, or transformed in God; even as iron plunged into the fire becomes, so to speak, fire, without ceasing to be iron.

What has happened in fact is this. Out of pure goodness God has made us His adopted children by a very real filiation, which makes us truly participate in His Divine nature, and in His inmost life. "This filiation," as S. Thomas teaches, "is thus really a likeness, a shared resemblance to the eternal filiation of the Word."[8] "Behold," says S. John, "what manner of charity the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called and should be the sons of God" (1 *John* iii. 1). We are "born of God" (*John* i. 28), "partakers of the divine nature" (2 *Peter* i. 4), "for whom he foreknew, he also predestinated to be made conformable to the image of his Son; that he might be the first-born amongst many brethren" (*Rom.* viii. 29).

Such is the essence of that glory which God reserves for His children: "Eye hath not seen nor ear heard: neither hath it entered into the heart of man what things God hath prepared for them that love him" (1 *Cor.* ii. 9).

B. The Christian life, or the beginning of life eternal.

In order to comprehend this it is sufficient to consider the opposite of what we have just said. To see face to face—*facie ad faciem*—there is the beatific life; to see from afar—*aspicientes a longe*;—and in an indistinct vision—*in speculo, in enigmate*,—there is the Christian life. But fundamentally the

[8] *Summ. Theol.*, III, q. 3, art. 1; Epist. to *Rom.* viii. 29. Cf. Garrigou-Lagrange, *op. cit.*, p. 137; *Vie Spirituelle*, April, 1920, p. 21.

life is the same: the Christian life is truly eternal life begun; even here below it is a divine life. Hence the counsel of S. Paul to his disciple Timothy: "Lay hold on eternal life" (*apprehende vitam æternam*) (1 *Tim.* vi. 12).

It is, in fact, death alone which separates these two forms of life, and we must not think of death as a great gulf fixed between earth and eternity, between life here and life hereafter. For the Christian, death is but a passage, the passing from an imperfect supernatural life to its full perfection. In this sense we must interpret those words of our Lord: "Amen, amen, I say unto you, whosoever shall keep my word *shall never see death*" (*John* viii. 51). "I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in me, although he be dead, shall live: *And everyone that liveth and believeth in me shall not die for ever*" (*John* xi. 25-26). And those other words to the Jews: "Your fathers did eat manna in the desert, and are dead. This is the bread which cometh down from heaven: that if any man eat of it *he may not die*" (*John* vi. 49-50).

Death is not then a break, a rough and complete rupture, separating two forms of existence which no ties can ever bind together again; it is an open door, opening on to a wider, fuller and more perfect life. It is a change, as the Catholic Liturgy teaches: "For Thy faithful, O Lord, life is changed, not taken away" (*tuis enim fidelibus, Domine, vita mutatur non tollitur*) (Preface of the Mass for the dead).

II. Structure of the Christian Life

If the Christian life is a divine life, it is certainly not that divine life which the blessed enjoy in heaven. In us it is necessarily limited and adapts itself to the exigences of our condition of wayfarers (*viatores*), or pilgrims on our way to the state of perfection.

It is indeed true that " we are now the sons of God, and it hath not yet appeared what we shall be " (1 *John* iii. 2). We have not yet arrived at the goal where the veil is torn aside and lifted; we are on the steep road which leads to it. We are awaiting our new birth (*Rom.* viii. 22-23) " for we are saved by hope " (*Rom.* viii. 24) and God " hath begotten us by the word of truth, that we might be some *beginning* of His creature " (definitely) (*James* i. 18).

In all these texts our progress towards eternal life is represented not as a journey towards some new end, but as a growth. The life we shall find at the end is the same now in course of development; planned out at first, then realized; adapted at first to our imperfect condition, later on released from its bonds, and expanding in heaven in the plenitude of divine sonship (*Rom.* viii. 28-29). Everything harmonizes, everything holds together, without let or hindrance, in the life of the just, in unison with the infallible prevision of God. In heaven fullness and complete development; here below, the beginning; the seed germinated and for ever increasing in growth and perfection.

We say the *seed*; because it is quite clear we cannot hope to attain so high an end as eternal glory

unless we suppose in ourselves the seed of glory, *semen gloriæ*. And this leads us to the study of what we may call the *structure of the Christian life*.

We have already seen that the state of complete beatitude has an organism or structure characterized by the light of glory, a most pure participation in the light proper to God Himself, which allows the beatified soul to see God face to face and consequently gives to its happiness a note of absolute permanence. Here below God is not seen face to face, or in the light of vision; He is known only in the obscurity of faith. Further, we hope to possess God in such a way that we cannot lose Him, but while we are still on earth we may lose Him by our own fault. Ours is the condition of wayfarers, and God Himself cannot change this. But He has given us means and helps such as are adapted to our state as travellers on the road to the beatific life.

Such helps He must give us since He has called us to live His life.[9]

It is only the thought of this reward which can dispel that hesitation, doubt, and even fear which trouble us when we come to consider the divine plan of our life which is the plan of the Christian life. God alone can attain to God. God alone can produce vitally those divine acts by which He enters into possession of Himself. But we are not God, and even when God favours us with His all-powerful help we cannot yet produce the vital acts reserved to God. This vital activity springs from that interior source which engenders it. We have not in our human nature the source of divine activity. It is then impossible, left to ourselves, really to *live*

[9] *Vie Spirituelle*, April, 1920, pp. 18-19.

the divine life; we can only be, at the most, passive agents, for God alone lives His wonderful divine life in us and by us.

We must put aside hesitation and admit that we are not simply instruments of the divine life, but that we do live it truly, in all its activity. Therefore we must also admit that there is within us a truly supernatural principle, a pure gift of God, a divine form, which inclines us as it were naturally and so easily and pleasantly, to live the life of God. In other words, we become *naturally divine*.

It is this *naturalization* of which our faith speaks; we become *naturally divine* by grace, infused into us at baptism, which is a re-birth of our soul as "a new creation in Christ Jesus" (*Ephes.* ii. 10; cf. 2 *Peter* i. 4).

There are therefore contained in grace: the *vital principle* of our spiritual life, which, so to speak, renders divine the very substance of our soul, and prepares it, though remotely, for the beatific vision and for those acts leading thereto; and *the seed*, whose growth marks the different stages of our ascension towards God and whose fully expanded blossom will only be seen in glory; and the mysterious *spring* which feeds all our spiritual life, the spring of which Jesus spoke to the Samaritan woman (*John* iv. 10-14), and of which He said to the Jews: "If any man thirst let him come to me and drink. He that believeth in me, out of his bosom shall flow rivers of living water" (*John* vii. 38).

But *in itself*, what is this grace, which we call habitual or sanctifying? "It is," replies P. Gardeil,[10] "the very nature of God transfused into

[10] *Vie Spirituelle*, November, 1919, p. 87.

us, in so far as we are capable thereof, naturalized, acclimatized, engrafted upon our nature, transforming it interiorly in such wise that the divine life springs from our soul thus divinized as from its source. . . . It is true we do not become God by grace; but all the same we are a race deified, capable of becoming sons of God, born indeed not of blood, nor of the will of man, but of God. By sanctifying grace God adopts us as his sons and makes us brothers of Jesus Christ. This is indeed a deifying of our nature, which raises us to a height sufficient to produce divine acts, raised up as it is to the dignity of the divine life. Thus there is truly in our nature a ' fountain of water springing up unto eternal life ' (*John* iv. 14), ' a divine seed ' (1 *John* iii. 9) coming forth from God, and capable of producing in us that same life which God Himself lives, of giving us faith and hope and charity, of knowing and loving God as He knows and loves Himself."

Thus it is that inasmuch as we are born of God by grace and affiliated to His divinity, we can produce acts which are proper to God, namely acts that are divine. Now acts, in fact, presuppose faculties. And supernatural acts presuppose supernatural faculties which proceed from a supernatural principle. Actually, together with sanctifying grace which is in the very substance of the soul, we receive all the infused habits which perfect our powers; and these are called the *infused virtues*; *theological* (faith, hope, charity) *and moral*, which are grouped round the four cardinal virtues (justice, prudence, fortitude, and temperance). If we add to these the gifts of the Holy Ghost properly so called, we have a full supernatural equipment, by the aid of which,

and through which, the divine life is developed in us and produces supernatural, that is, divine acts.

Leaving till later on the study of the gifts of the Holy Ghost and the moral virtues, let us look more closely at the rôle of the theological virtues.

We do not *by faith* attain to the clear vision of God, but God, in place of the vision, gives us nevertheless a certain knowledge of what He is in Himself. Our faith in fact attains to God Himself; it is to His Truth, that is to the Uncreated Truth Revealing, which the grace of faith makes us adhere. It is the Word of God Himself which we believe, and this Word reveals to us "the deep things of God" (1 *Cor.* ii. 10). Our faith is thus the substance or the principle, the seed of the things we hope for (*Heb.* xi. 1) and which we shall contemplate in heaven. This faith, in spite of its obscurity, is infinitely superior to natural intuition even the most instinctive, or even the most sublime natural knowledge of the highest angel.

Consequently the *love of God*, as He is in Himself, can be engendered in our hearts. In order to will and to love it is necessary first to know: and the love of God finds in the teaching of faith its object and its complete satisfaction. Full possession alone is not yet attained, but faith promises it as a certainty, and guarantees to us God's efficacious help, in order to arrive at it: our *hope* is strong and almost equals anticipated possession. Thence the word of S. Paul: *spe gaudentes*, "rejoicing in hope" (*Rom.* xii. 12).

Doubtless so long as hope has not given place to the actual possession of God, the supernatural life of grace and charity may be lost, but only because we ourselves are liable to fail and may be found

wanting. Sanctifying grace and charity, considered in themselves, are absolutely incorruptible, just as fresh water which remains pure so long as the vessel which contains it does not break. (Cf. 2 *Cor.* iv. 6-9.) We can lose charity on account of the instability of our free will, but considered in itself "love (of charity) is as strong as death, jealousy as hard as hell"; its heat is as the heat of fire, the fire of Him who is. "Many waters cannot quench charity, neither can the floods drown it" (*Cant.* viii. 6).[11]

By the exercise of the theological virtues then, we as far as possible here on earth make as our very own the divine acts by which God Himself lives, the acts by which the blessed are associated to His life and live in Him. Thus the exercise of the theological virtues constitutes a life of an entirely superior order, a divine order, which takes for granted that we are "born of God—not of blood, or of the will of man" (*John* i. 13). We are not merely servants of God, but His children, His friends, because He has adopted us as sons, by an adoption that is real even as grace is real, in a sense other than nature is real, since grace is given us to last for ever.[12]

It is thus easy to understand why faith teaches us that the Holy Trinity dwells in the soul in a state of grace as in a temple where God is known and loved, and being united to Him, finds in that union the consummation of its dignity. This follows from what we have been saying. It is certain that in heaven the whole Blessed Trinity dwells in the soul

[11] Garrigou-Lagrange, *op. cit.*, I, p. 144. *Vie Spirituelle*, April, 1920, pp. 19-24.

[12] Cf. Gardeil, *Vie Spirituelle*, November, 1919; Joret, "L'Hôte Divin," in *Vie Spirituelle*, October, 1919, pp. 37-38.

of the blessed as in a living tabernacle, where It ceases not to be glorified. But since the Christian life, or the life of grace and charity, is fundamentally the same as that of heaven, we must of necessity say, as Revelation teaches, that already the Blessed Trinity dwells in the souls of the just. We shall see later on what this indwelling is and how it is explained: it is sufficient for us to note here that it is the fulfilment, or the marvellous crowning, of the splendid supernatural edifice of our Christian life.

Such then is the life of grace and charity, such is its dignity, and such also is our own dignity. It is the dignity of sonship, for God has adopted us in His great mercy and rendered us capable by grace of performing those vital acts proper to God, and enabling us to reproduce, after the example of Christ, and in our position as creatures, the divine ways of our Father.

Behold then the height to which we have to raise ourselves if we would be worthy of our vocation as *simple Christians*. Behold also what a falling away should we fall into sin! The Christian who sins is worse than a creature misled; he is utterly a *degenerate*, a being in which the nature which God gave him is corrupted, a being who has lost his divine strength and his chance of eternity. We cannot better end this short study of the spirit of the Christian life than by recalling those words of S. Leo the Great: "O Christian, acknowledge thy dignity, and as thou hast received a share in the divine nature, take care never to return by any unworthy conduct to that base origin from which thou didst come" (Sermon, On the Nativity of our Lord).

CHAPTER II

THE SPIRITUAL LIFE

Definition of its nature: I. False ideas concerning the spiritual life: (*a*) unbelievers; (*b*) sceptics and the worldly-minded; (*c*) incomplete or inexact ideas. II. The true solution: perfection consists chiefly in charity; (1) authority of Holy Scripture; (2) theological proof; (3) objections of the intellectuals. Conclusion.

We call the spiritual life the perfection of the Christian life. It is naught else than the Christian life made perfect under the superabounding grace of the Holy Spirit, and there is merely a difference of degree between the two lives. They are both of the same order—the supernatural order—only greater or less in degree of perfection: the Christian life is the basis of the spiritual life.

In considering the end to which it is essentially ordered, we defined the Christian life: the beginning of eternal life in our souls, or life eternal begun in the obscurity of faith. Grace, of which it is the expansion, is the seed of glory; and of the three theological virtues which we possess, there is one, namely charity, which endures for ever. This endurance of charity in glory tells us whither we should look if we would discover in what principally and precisely Christian perfection consists.

In this study we shall take S. Thomas Aquinas

for our guide. In the IIa, IIae, q. 184, he treats of Christian perfection and devotes twenty-three questions of the same IIa, IIae to the virtue of charity.

Definition of its nature

In what then does the perfection of the Christian life chiefly consist? Does it consist, asks S. Thomas, in wisdom, in fortitude, in patience, or in the totality of the virtues? These are, in fact, possible solutions of the question, and such solutions as these have actually been put forward.

Before replying to this question we ought to say briefly how unbelievers and sceptics have faced, and still face, this problem, and give their idea of perfection and of the spiritual life, particularly of its final stage, which is the mystical life. We shall then refute certain opinions prevalent among the devout, of which the least we can say is that they are inexact.

I. False Ideas of the Christian Life

(*a*) *Ideas of unbelievers.* M. Tanquerey[1] points out two principal ones:

(1) The idea of those who bring prejudice and manifest ill-will to the study of this question. Under the pretext that there are false mystics and false devotees, they include all phenomena that are called

[1] *Précis de Théologie Ascétique et Mystique*, p. 203 *seq.*

mystical in the same category. Let us quote among these ill-disposed: Max Nordau (*Dégénérescence*, Tome I, p. 115); J. H. Leuba (*La Psychologie des Phénomènes Religieux*); E. Murisier (*Les Maladies du Sentiment Religieux*). In their eyes the pretended perfection of mystics is only a morbid phenomenon, a sort of psycho-neurosis, an exalted religious feeling, and even a special form of sexual love, as is shown by the terms so often used by mystical writers, such as betrothal, spiritual marriage, kiss, embrace and divine caress.

It is scarcely necessary to remark that these writers understand nothing whatever of the divine love; and it is astounding to find such assertions where simple justice demands modesty and discretion. Besides, a celebrated psychologist, who is neither a mystic nor a believer, Mr. William James, severely criticizes this tendency to debase the most noble and holy sentiments by attributing to them so low an origin.

"An example of this kind of reasoning," he writes, "is the fashion common among contemporary writers of criticizing religious emotions by endeavouring to show that they have a close connection with sexual life. Conversion is only a crisis of adolescence and puberty; the macerations of the Saints and the self-sacrifice of missionaries are only deviations from the instinct which causes parents to sacrifice themselves for their children; the most hysterical nun condemned to the most abnormal life would find in Jesus Christ a substitute for a more terrestrial object of affection. . . . It seems to me there are few more senseless theories than this of considering religion as a perversion of the sexual instinct. . . . In such cases the observed effects are infinitely greater than the pretended

causes, and for the most part of a totally different nature."[2] We may add that the true mystics have practised the most heroic purity and have often used equally heroic means to preserve it. But as W. James goes on to remark, " it is necessary in the language of religion to make use of images borrowed from our own life." If, then, mystics have employed terms of human love, it is because there are no other so capable of expressing in a similar way the tenderness of divine love.

(2) Other unbelievers, while doing justice to the mystics, doubt the objective reality of what they describe. Among these are W. James and Maxime de Montmorand (*Psychologie des Mystiques*, 1920). They admit, writes M. Tanquerey, that religion produces wonderful effects in souls, an invincible soaring towards God, a boundless altruism in regard of their neighbour; that their supposed egotism is, in its origin, only an eminently social charity which has the happiest influence; that their thirst for suffering does not prevent them from enjoying indescribable delights and from spreading joy around them. . . . But, they ask, are they not victims of auto-suggestion and hallucination.[3]

To these we may say that such happy effects could only proceed from a cause proportionate to them; that, in its entirety, real and lasting good can only proceed from truth. If Christian mystics only have practised heroic virtue, and produced useful social works, it is because the contemplation and the love of God which inspired these works are not hallucina-

[2] W. James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience.*

[3] Cf. W. James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience,* especially Ch. IX, Critique of sanctity; and the Conclusion: Value of the religious life.

tions, but living and active realities: *ex fructibus eorem cognocetis eos.* (*Matt.* vii. 20.)[4]

(*b*) *Replies to sceptics and the worldly minded.* Perfection is, according to them, devotion; and of this their ideas are most often superficial and erroneous.

(1) *The devout,* they affirm, *are hypocrites.* There are certainly false devotees, but to generalize is to confound the abuse with the right use and to make exceptions the rule.

(2) For others, piety is merely an exalted state of sensibility and imagination, and contains something good at the very most for women and children. The long list of saintly men, all of good sense and manly power and often gifted with the highest intelligence, is the answer to this.

(3) They also say that to aspire to perfection is dangerous, for it is an unattainable Utopia: it is sufficient to observe the Commandments and there is no need to try to acquire the extraordinary virtues. To this be it said that the lives of the Saints prove that perfection has been in fact attained on earth; and the practise of the counsels, far from hindering the precepts, makes the keeping of them more easy.

(*c*) *Incomplete or inaccurate solutions of the question.* These are more serious and therefore demand careful attention.

(1) Some Christians, unconscious followers of those ancient philosophers who considered perfection to consist above all in wisdom, place it in that *contemplation* which springs from the gift of wisdom. They think to arrive quickly at perfection by the assiduous reading of the great mystical writers, without troubling—or at least not sufficiently

[4] Tanquerey, *op. cit.*, p. 204.

—to practise the virtues they recommend. This conception is incomplete, because, as P. Garrigou-Lagrange remarks (*op. cit.*, I, p. 153, No. 4), it is not in contemplation precisely as an act of the intelligence that perfection consists, as we shall see later on. Nevertheless, the loving contemplation of God here below is the most efficacious means of attaining the perfection of charity; it is indeed a means conjoined to its end.

(2) Others, and their opinion is as widespread as it is erroneous, make virtue and perfection to consist in character and temperament. Thus natures inclined to action are by that very fact inclined to make perfection consist in external activity, namely in the strength and courage that such activity demands, or in patience when circumstances are unfavourable to their wishes. Those of a naturally genial and kindly disposition make perfection consist in helping the unfortunate. "Persons who are quick and little disposed to curb their irritable temper think they are preserving the order of justice," shrewdly remarks M. Ribet,[5] "when they irritate all who approach them, lose their temper with everyone and everything, leaving no one in peace, themselves included. The slack and lazy, on the contrary, think it best to advance by slow steps and look on tranquillity and long-suffering as the basis of perfection."

(3) Another view consists in regarding *austerities, fasts, and practices of penance* as the way of perfection. What these persons admire most in the lives of the Saints is their maceration of the body and heroic penances, and for them, the most austere religious orders are, by that very fact, the most

[5] *Ascétique Chrétienne*, p. 7.

perfect. This, in reality, is to make virtue consist precisely in what is difficult rather than in what is good and in what God wishes; it is to confuse the means with the end, which is union with God. Austerity is not the end, but the means which should be proportionate to the end.[6]

"Fasts, vigils, meditations on the Scriptures, nakedness of spirit and extreme poverty are not perfection but means towards it; for the end does not consist in these things, since they are only the means of attaining the end. And by them we strive to rise to the perfection of charity."[7]

(4) We must mention also those who see perfection in exterior and interior worship, that is in the acts of the virtue of religion, and in the exercises of piety faithfully accomplished—which opinion comes nearer the truth.

We must also mention those people who place it in a *solitary life*, above all where the soul is favoured with extraordinary graces—visions and revelations, and who thereby make perfection an almost inaccessible summit, out of the reach of ordinary mortals.

S. Francis of Sales gently upbraids all who hold these false ideas of devotion and perfection. "Above all things," he wrote at the beginning of the *Introduction to the Devout Life*, "you must understand what the virtue of devotion is, because though there is only one that is true, there are many vain and false ones, and if you do not know the right one, you may easily be deceived and cultivate a devotion that is useless and superstitious."

[6] Cf. S. Thomas, *Summ. Theol.*, Ia, IIae, q. 114, a. 4, 2 obj.; IIa, IIae, q. 155, a. 4, 2 obj.; q. 123, a. 12, 2 obj.; IIa, IIae, q. 188, a. 7, 1 obj.; q. 161, a. 5, 2 obj.

[7] Cassian's Conferences, I, Ch. VII.

"Arelius painted in all the faces of his pictures the resemblance of the women he loved; thus to everyone there appeals a devotion according to his own taste and fancy. He who is given to fasting holds him as devout who fasts, although his heart is full of rancour, and not daring to dip his tongue in wine or even in water through temperance, he does not mind plunging it into the blood of his neighbour by his lies and calumny.

"Another thinks himself devout because he says a great many prayers every day, although afterwards his tongue is let loose in all kinds of disagreeable, arrogant, and injurious words to his servants and friends. Another gladly pulls out his purse to give an alms to the poor, but he will not draw sweetness out of his heart to forgive his enemies; another will pardon his enemies, but will not pay his creditors unless forced by law. All these kinds of people are, as a rule, esteemed devout, but indeed they are not. Saul's retainers sought David in his house; Michol having put a statue in a bed and covered it with David's clothes, made them believe that David was ill and asleep. Thus many persons, clothing themselves with the outward appearance of sincere devotion, are therefore taken for devout, while in truth they are merely shams."[8]

(5) But perhaps some may say that perfection consists in all the Christian perfections taken together. S. Paul indeed bids us "put on the whole armour of God in order to overcome the wiles of the devil—to resist in the evil day and to stand after having overcome all" (*Ephes.* vi. 11).

Doubtless all the Christian virtues are necessary for perfection, but they must be rightly ordered as

[8] *Introduction to the Devout Life*, Part I, Ch. I.

for the functioning of an organism. The question is to know exactly if among them all there is not one which inspires, dominates, and animates or informs the others, making the activities of them all converge towards the same supreme end. If so, is it not in this dominating virtue that perfection consists, and to which all the others lend their aid?

II. The True Solution of the Problem: The Essence of Perfection

The reply to all these questions is the statement that perfection consists above all in charity. This is proved from Holy Scripture and from theology.

(1) *Holy Scripture.* "Put ye on, therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, the bowels of mercy, benignity, humility, modesty, patience . . . bearing with one another. . . . But *above* all these things have *charity*, which is the *bond of perfection*" (*Coloss.* iii. 12-14).

This is an echo of the Master's own teaching. This virtue of charity is indeed the one which corresponds to those two great precepts on which all the rest, together with the counsels, depend. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart and with thy whole soul and with all thy strength and with all thy mind and thy neighbour as thyself" (*Luke* x. 27). Listen also to S. Paul. Without charity, all the rest is nothing, the gift of languages, the gift of prophecy, the knowledge of mysteries, the faith which moves mountains, alms, even death itself, all—that is to say other virtues, gifts, or gratuitous graces—all count for nothing without charity (1 *Cor.* xiii. 1). Without it, the

first commandment of God remains unfulfilled, the will of man is not conformed to God's will, man is still turned away from God. And though we may be surprised at such an assertion, the apostle hastens to explain; he insinuates that while prophecies will be fulfilled, tongues will cease and knowledge disappear, " charity never fails." " Now there remain faith, hope and charity, these three, but the greatest of these is charity " (1 *Cor.* xiii. 13). Why? Because it remains for ever when faith and hope have disappeared to give place to vision and to the perfect possession of God.

S. John, the apostle of love, says the same. " God," says he, " is charity, and he that abideth in charity abideth in God and God in him " (1 *John* iv. 16). " He that loveth not knoweth not God, for God is charity " (*ibid.* v. 8). " We know that we have passed from death to life because we love the brethren. He that loveth not abideth in death " (1 *John* iii. 14).

S. Peter also adds the weight of his authority: " Before all things have a constant mutual charity among yourselves; for charity covereth a multitude of sins " (1 *Peter* iv. 8). He knew it by experience. Had he not heard the Master say of Magdalen the sinner, " Many sins are forgiven her because she hath loved much." It remains now to consider what theology teaches of the complete meaning and full value of this Scripture teaching.

(2) *Theology.* Its task is easy, given such a foundation. Let us see how S. Thomas establishes the truth that Christian perfection consists chiefly in charity.[9]

[9] S. Thomas treats this question in the IIa, IIae, q. 184, a. 1, in that part of the *Summa* called " On particular states."

Every creature, he says, is perfect in so far as it attains its end, which is its final perfection. Now the final end of the human creature is God, and it is charity which unites us to Him, according to the word of S. John, " He who abides in charity abides in God and God in him." It is then *chiefly* in charity that the perfection of the Christian life consists (Art. 1). A little farther on, in Art. 3, S. Thomas adds: " Perfection is found principally in the love of God and secondly in the love of our neighbour, both of which are the objects of the chief precepts of the divine law; whereas perfection is only found accidentally in the means or instruments of perfection, such as we see in the evangelical counsels."

In this passage the holy Doctor indicates clearly that perfection consists in charity and at the same time points out the two objects of charity, God and our neighbour.

But what kind of charity? What kind of love? Certainly not a sensible love. Man is in truth composed of body and soul, and a sensible element is often mingled with his most noble affections; but nevertheless this feeling sometimes fails, and in all cases it is merely an accessory. The essence of love is devotion, the firm will to give oneself and, if need be, to sacrifice self for God and His glory, and to prefer His good pleasure to our own and that of creatures.

Let us examine this idea more closely, distinguishing three aspects of the charity which unites us to God: the fact of union itself, the acts which result therefrom and the habitual disposition to exercise them.

(*a*) *The fact of union.* Every soul in the state of

sanctifying grace possesses this union, because the soul in a state of grace has charity in its essence and is therefore united to God by love. By the power of this grace, man can perform acts of charity; the disposition to produce them is more or less active, more or less constant and generous.

(*b*) *The acts which result from it.* The simple state of grace is not perfection properly so called, not the *perfectio simpliciter* of ascetical and mystical theology, to which interior souls aspire. "There are souls indeed," remarks M. Ribet—"and too great in number—who possess sanctifying grace and consequently substantial grace and yet who, nevertheless, are very imperfect; they make no effort towards the attainment of perfection; indeed they, on the contrary, fall farther away from it on account of the tepidity and spiritual idleness in which they live. In order to be in a state of grace, it suffices to be free from mortal sin; and this essential grace is not lost if we do not mortify our passions or avoid deliberate venial sins, or if we do not make frequent efforts after virtue; yet, this want of mortification of the passions, this habit of venial sin or sloth of soul are, as everyone admits, the very opposite of perfection."[10]

These acts, then, must flow from an interior source of charity, but perfection does not consist in the fact that charity produces certain good desires, or even certain good deeds, like fruit here and there on a more or less withered branch. Souls who have sanctifying grace and yet only perform supernatural acts from time to time, are not reckoned perfect.

The disposition of the will to act by love may be more or less perfect, more or less lively; but when

[10] *Ascétique Chrétienne*, p. 23.

this disposition is remiss, it hinders rather than helps towards perfection.

Perfection then requires grace and charity, but that is not all: it presupposes the two aspects just considered, but it is only by the third that it acquires its full character.

(*c*) *Habitual disposition to perform the acts.* When this disposition is active, prompt and ardent, then alone the charity which works in it is perfect. When it is such that it not only holds the soul united to God, but draws it to Him promptly, frequently and lovingly, then it attains perfection. In fact, to act for God with ardour, with frequent and loving desire, to have at heart a ready love which breaks forth into repeated acts, this it is that gives us the exact idea and characteristic of perfection. We may, in truth, conclude with all theologians that perfection consists in active love, a love which unites us actually to God and blossoms forth into all sorts of good works.

Such is also the doctrine of S. Francis of Sales: "True and loving devotion (which for him is the same as perfection) presupposes the love of God; it is nothing else than a true love of God, but is not any love of God, for in so far as divine love beautifies the soul, it is called grace, rendering us pleasing to His Divine Majesty; but in so far as He gives us the power to do well, it is called charity; but when it has arrived at such a high degree that we not only do good but do it carefully, frequently, and promptly, then it is called devotion. . . . In short, devotion is nothing but a spiritual vivacity and readiness by means of which charity works in us and we by it promptly and lovingly. . . . Finally the flame of charity and devotion are no more

different from one another than the flame is from fire, whence charity, being a spiritual fire, when it burns very brightly, is called devotion; indeed devotion adds nothing to the fire of charity except the flame, which renders charity prompt, active and diligent, not only in the observance of the Commandments, but in the practice of the counsels and heavenly inspirations."[11]

Perfection then consists practically in an active charity. Must we conclude therefore that the other virtues do not contribute to the essence of perfection and only belong to it accidentally as instruments and secondary means? Certain theologians have held this view (Cajetan, Suarez: among modern writers; such seems to be also the opinion of M. Ribet, *Ascétique Chrétienne*, pp. 26, 27).

But the Thomist teaching is, in general, somewhat different, precisely because the thought of S. Thomas appears to be different. He says: "Perfection consists essentially in the *precepts* (of which the two chief are those of charity and of which the others exclude what is contrary to charity); it consists accidentally or by instrumentality in the *counsels*, which require us to renounce certain things, things which without being contrary to charity are an obstacle to its activity and its full development."[12] Whence it follows that perfection consists not in charity only, but also in those acts of the other virtues which are of precept and which can be ruled or commanded by charity.

Thus the acts of the virtues, faith, hope, religion, humility, etc., belong to the very essence of perfection, which is a fullness.

[11] *Introduction to the Devout Life*, Part I, Ch. I.
[12] *Summ. Theol.*, IIa, IIae, q. 184, a. 3.

Now of this fullness, charity is the bond. "Charity is the bond of perfection," writes S. Francis of Sales, "because in it and by it are contained and gathered together all the perfections of the soul, and without it, not only could she not have the virtues in their entirety, but she could not have any one virtue in its perfection. Without the cement and mortar which binds the stones and walls together the building would fall; without the nerves, muscles, and tendons the body would go to pieces, and without charity the virtues could not hold together."[13]

This charity, the bond of perfection, includes in its general idea the love of God and our neighbour. Can we from this conclude that the *love of our neighbour* enters equally into the essence of Christian perfection? There can be no doubt about the answer: charity towards our neighbour tends to perfection for the same reason and in the measure that our charity tends towards God. For as S. Thomas teaches: "Charity has not only God for its object, but our neighbour also. There are not two kinds of charity, one with regard to God and one with regard to our neighbour; there is only one which includes God loved for Himself and our neighbour loved for God. For it is God Himself that we love in our neighbour. It is certainly God whom we should love and whom we love in him, as in the image and reflection of the divine perfections; it is the divine goodness radiated and shown forth by our neighbour as a creature of God. It follows then clearly," concludes S. Thomas, "that the love wherewith we love

[13] *Treatise of the Love of God*, I, II, Ch. IX. Cf. *Spirit of S. Francis of Sales*, Part I, Ch. XXV and XXVI.

God and that with which we love our neighbour is of one and the same kind specifically. For this reason also the habit of charity extends not only to the love of God but also of our neighbour."[14]

Consequently perfection, which is fundamentally active charity, requires in practice the love of our neighbour in the same measure as charity itself requires it. This degree, according to S. Thomas, excludes at least all that is contrary to love of our neighbour, because " one may notice in the matter of the love of our neighbour a double perfection, as also in the matter of the love of God—one without which charity cannot exist (it is of this we are now speaking) and this twofold perfection consists, for man, in having nothing in his heart contrary to the love of his neighbour."[15]

And we conclude that this love, in the sense explained, forms a part of Christian perfection. " As for me," says S. Francis of Sales, " I know of no other perfection than that of loving God with one's whole heart and one's neighbour as one's self. All other perfection is false; charity is the sole bond of perfection among Christians, and the only virtue which perfectly unites us to God and our neighbour, in which is our end and final consummation. They are deceived who invent any other perfection."[16]

This is precisely the doctrine of the Gospel, interpreted by the apostle of love. " God," says S. John, " is charity." If, then, we would be like Him and be perfect as our Heavenly Father, we must love Him as He has loved us, for it is He

[14] *Summ. Theol.*, IIa, IIae, q. 25, a. 1, in corp.
[15] *Summ. Theol.*, IIa, IIae, q. 184, a. 2, ad. 3um.
[16] *Spirit of S. Francis of Sales*, Part I, Ch. XXV.

who has loved us first—with an eternal love. But as we cannot love Him whom we have not seen, without loving our brethren and His creatures made in His image whom we do see, we ought also to love our neighbour, to the point of sacrificing ourselves for him. "Dearly beloved, let us love one another, for charity is of God and everyone that loveth is born of God and knoweth God. He that loveth not, knoweth not God, for God is charity . . . in this is charity, not as though we had loved God, but because he has first loved us and sent his Son to be a propitiation for our sins. My dearest, if God has so loved us, *we also ought to love one another*. . . . God is charity and he that abideth in charity abideth in God and God in him" (1 *John* iv. 7-16).

It can hardly be put more clearly that the perfection of charity, in short perfection itself, consists in the twofold love of God and our neighbour. Let us add, however—and this must be noted—that these two elements of charity ought not to be on the same plane, for they keep with regard to perfection the order and rank which they have in charity. The primary and essential object of charity is God, whereas our neighbour is only a secondary object. Likewise the love of God is the first and final end of perfection, but the love of our neighbour is only a subordinate and accidental end.

If we now take a general view of this subject, we shall see at once that charity, which is the bond of perfection, is not any kind of charity; it is a fullness which extends to God and overflows on our neighbour and therefore presupposes and includes all the virtues which contribute to its exercise. It is this charity which S. Paul described when he said:

"Charity is patient, is kind; charity envieth not, dealeth not perversely, is not puffed up, is not ambitious, seeketh not her own, is not provoked to anger, thinketh no evil, rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth, beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things" (1 *Cor.* xiii. 4-7).

Thus we have an adequate concept of charity, which is the essence of perfection, and which unites all the virtues, inspires them, regulates them, animates or informs them and ensures their perseverance by bringing all their acts to bear on the same last end, which is God loved above all; a charity which not only unites us to God, but in some sort binds together in us all the virtues, of which it is the very soul and synthesis, uniting them into a perfect whole.

(3) *Objection of the intellectuals.* "Nevertheless," remarks P. Garrigou-Lagrange,[17] "certain minds, especially among the intellectuals, find an objection to this great doctrine, as we shall now explain."

The intelligence is the first of man's faculties, therefore the perfection of man is to be found in his intellectual knowledge, especially in the knowledge of God, the supreme ruler of human life. In other words, perfection is found rather in light and knowledge than in love.

S. Thomas furnishes us with the answer to this. He himself admits that the intelligence is superior to the will which it directs (Ia, q. 82, a. 3). He admits also that in heaven our beatitude will consist essentially in the Beatific vision, that is to say in the immediate intellectual vision of the divine

[17] *Op. cit.*, pp. 164-170.

essence, the love of the blessed being the necessary consequence of this immediate knowledge of the Sovereign Good (Ia, IIae, q. 3, a. 4). He teaches then clearly the superiority of the intelligence over the will, both in principle and in the perfect life of heaven.

Why, therefore, does he elsewhere affirm that Christian perfection here below consists particularly in charity, a virtue of the will, and not in faith, or in the gift of wisdom, or in contemplation, which belong to the intelligence?

Here is the substance of his very profound doctrine. Although one faculty may, by its nature, be superior to another, as sight is to hearing, nevertheless it sometimes happens that an act of the second may be superior to an act of the first, just as, for example, the hearing of a grand symphony is superior to the sight of an ordinary colour. Further, although the intelligence is by nature superior to the will which it directs, seeing that it has a more simple, absolute and universal object, namely *being* in all its universality, yet, from a certain point of view, and with regard to God, the intelligence here below remains inferior to the will.[18] In other words, here below the love of God is more perfect than the knowledge of God.[19] Why? " Because the act of our intelligence comes about by a representation *in us* of the reality understood, while the action of our will tends towards the thing loved such as it is *in itself*; the good, the object of the will is *in* things, while truth is formally in the mind."

It follows, therefore, that *here below* our know-

[18] *Summ. Theol.*, 1, P., q. 82, a. 3.
[19] *Op. cit.*, Ia, q. 82, a. 3.

ledge of God is inferior to our love of Him, since "in order to know God, we, in a certain way, draw Him towards us, and in order to represent Him to ourselves we limit Him by the limitation of our ideas. On the contrary, in order to love Him, we tend towards Him and raise ourselves up to Him as He is in Himself. It is then better to love God than to know Him, although love always supposes a certain knowledge which directs it."

We find the same doctrine in the treatise on charity IIa, IIae, q. 27, a. 4. Our knowledge of God, the holy Doctor says, is called enigmatical, because it is mediate—or by the intermediary of ideas—and will disappear in order to give place to full vision. But our charity will never cease, because even here on earth it adheres immediately to God.

The reason is that "knowledge being brought about by representation within us of an object known, is proportioned to the manner of being of this object. . . . That is why our knowledge of God on earth remains mediate, since it raises itself to Him by the intermediary of sensible objects, whereas, even here, our love of charity rises to God directly and is derived from God and extends to creatures."

Conclusions

Hence the following conclusions:

(*a*) *Charity is greater than faith and hope.* "Faith and hope attain to God, in so far as they give a knowledge of the truth and help in the attainment of beatitude, but charity attains to God Himself, to rest in Him and not to receive anything

from Him. The latter then is greater than faith and hope and consequently than the moral virtues which have not God for their direct object."[20]

(*b*) *Charity is greater than any knowledge here below*, even greater than contemplation which proceeds from the gift of wisdom. This quasi-experimental knowledge of God imposes a sort of limit in our ideas of Him and draws sweetness from the love which inspires it.

" It is charity which makes us one in nature and sympathy with divine things thus rendered delightful for us."[21]

Hence we may take it as firmly established that *in charity* consists the essence of perfection and that charity is, according to the word of S. Paul, " the bond of perfection."

[20] The conclusion is the contrary when it is a question of inferior objects. In knowing them, we raise them, in some sort, to our own intelligence. We assimilate them to ourselves; in loving them we stoop down to them and bring ourselves to their level. *Summ. Theol.*, IIa, IIae, q. 23, a. 6.

[21] *Summ. Theol.*, IIa, IIae, q. 45, a. 2 and 4.

CHAPTER III

PERFECTION AND THE PRECEPT OF THE LOVE OF GOD

I. The precepts and the counsels. II. Extent of the precept of the love of God. III. Consequences: (1) perfection and (*a*) mortal sin; (*b*) venial sin; (*c*) imperfect acts; (2) the law of the continual progress of charity; (3) the search for perfection the sure road to sanctity. Conclusion.

We have now defined perfection, but that is not sufficient. We are here on essentially practical ground; knowing what perfection is, it is for us to ask ourselves what is our duty with regard to it. Are we bound to tend towards it? In other words, are we commanded to love God, which is the essence of perfection? If so, what are the limits of this obligation and precept?

I. Precept of the love of God[1]

It is sufficient only to open the Gospel to be assured of this precept of loving God, and we find it there explained in the most complete manner. We read in *S. Luke* x. 27: "*Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy strength and with all thy mind.*"

It only remains to consider the relations which

[1] Cf. Garrigou-Lagrange, *op. cit.*, p. 215 *sqq.*

exist between the precept and perfection. Has the precept of the law of God any *limit*, in such wise, that, beyond the limit, it is only a counsel of charity, wherein consists perfection? Some held this opinion. They said: To observe the precept even perfectly it is not necessary to have a high degree of charity; that high perfection which forbids not only deliberate sin, but also involuntary imperfections, is only of counsel; it is not required by the precept, it *surpasses* it. Perfection would then lie in the performance of certain counsels of charity, which would be superior to the first precept itself.[2]

That might appear true to a superficial observer, but if we try to sound the depth and establish the full force of the evangelical precept, we shall soon find out that this opinion has little foundation.

Let us examine the argument of S. Thomas. These are his first words on the question. It is said in *Deut.* vi. 5: "*Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart*," and in *Levit.* xix. 18: "*Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.*" Our Lord adds, *Matt.* xxii. 40: "*On these two commandments dependeth the whole law and the prophets.*" But the perfection of charity, according to which the Christian life is perfect, consists precisely in that we love God with all our heart and our neighbour as ourselves. Whence it follows that perfection consists in the fulfilment of the precepts.

To understand this better, it must be noted that perfection consists necessarily and primarily in one thing and secondarily in another.

[2] This is the opinion of Suarez, contrary to S. Augustine and S. Thomas, who teach that the perfection of the Christian life is not merely counselled, but commanded by the first precept, as the end to which it must tend.

Necessarily, essentially, the perfection of the Christian life consists in charity, chiefly in the love of God, and after that in the love of one's neighbour; it is the object of the two principal precepts of the divine law. But one would be deceived in thinking that this love of God and our neighbour was a law only in a certain manner, or degree, beyond which it became simply a counsel. The statement of the commandment is clear and shows in what perfection consists. "*Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart—ex toto corde tuo.*"

The two expressions *all* and *whole or entire* are synonymous. In the same way it is said: "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself," and everyone loves himself, so to speak, without limit.

That this is so is clear from the teaching of the apostle (1 *Tim.* i. 5): "The end of the commandment is charity." But the end is not presented to the will partially, but as a whole, wherein it differs from the means. You either will a thing or you do not; as Aristotle says (1 *Polit.*, c. 3): "You cannot half will a thing. Does a doctor partially will the healing of a patient? Clearly not. What he measures is the remedy, not the recovery, which he wills without measure." Perfection then consists *essentially in the precepts.* Thus S. Augustine says in his book *De Perfectione Justitiæ*, Ch. VIII: "Why then should this perfection not be ordered to men, even although they cannot have it fully in this life?"[3] It is very clearly proved by the teaching of the Angelic Doctor that the precept of the love of God has no limit. Why?

[3] *Summ. Theol.*, IIa, IIae, q. 184, a. 3.

(1) Because the end thus proposed to man is not an intermediate end, but a final end, namely God Himself, who is the infinite Good. "Man," says S. Thomas, "can never love God as much as He ought to be loved, neither can he believe and hope in Him as he ought."[4]

(2) Because our charity *ought* always to go on growing till death, because we are here in the state of wayfarers, on our voyage to eternity. "The way to eternity," writes P. Garrigou-Lagrange,[5] "is not made that we may sit down and go to sleep upon it, it is meant to be walked on." Only the idle lie down on the road instead of going on to the end. For the traveller who has not yet arrived at his destination it is a commandment to advance, not merely a counsel; just as according to a *law* of nature, every child should go on growing till he attains to full manhood. But when it is a question of going towards God, it is not that we advance corporally, but rather by love and charity, *gressibus amoris*, as S. Thomas says.

Thus every day we should advance nearer to God without fixing any limit to the progress of our love. We have no right to say: "I will love God so far and no farther"; this would be to disregard the first precept, which is without measure: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, with thy whole soul, with all thy strength, with all thy mind." We see here the nature and extent of the precept.

But besides these precepts there are the counsels. What relation have they to perfection? Does not perfection consist at all in the evangelical counsels?

[4] *Summ. Theol.*, Ia, IIae, q. 64, a. 4.
[5] *Op. cit.*, I, p. 220.

"Perfection," replies S. Thomas, "consists in the counsels after a subordinate and instrumental manner which means that counsels are only valuable means of attaining it. All the counsels, indeed, as well as the precepts, are ordered in charity, yet with a certain difference. The precepts, which are inferior to the two commandments of love, have for their end to remove all that is contrary to charity and all that would destroy it; while the end of the counsels is to remove all that would hinder or prevent the perfect exercise of charity yet without being contrary to it, such as marriage, the necessity of occupying oneself in secular affairs, and other things of this sort."[6]

The counsels are, then, means or instruments of perfection, but they do not essentially constitute it, for it consists in the fulfilment of the supreme precept which is without limit, namely, to love God and our neighbour.

II. *Extent of the precept of the love of God*

Attention having been already given to the rôle of the precepts and counsels, we must now determine the extent of the first.

As S. Thomas remarks: "All are obliged to observe the precepts: this is necessary for salvation. If, then, the perfection of the Christian life is contained essentially in the precepts, it follows that perfection is necessary for salvation and that all are obliged to be perfect, which is a manifest error. Now since imperfect charity already fulfils the

[6] *Summ. Theol.*, IIa, IIae, q. 184, a. 3.

precepts it seems that perfect charity consists essentially, not in fulfilling the precepts but the counsels."[7] Such is the objection. Here is the profound answer which S. Thomas derives from S. Augustine and which shows forth the height and breadth of that precept of love which only the Saints observe perfectly. As S. Augustine says (*De Perf. Justitiæ*, Ch. VII): "The perfection of charity is a thing commanded for man in this life because he cannot run on the right road or in the right direction unless he knows the goal for which he is making, and how should he know without some precept to point it out?"

At the same time, that which is the object of the precept of love can be fulfilled in divers ways. Also *he who fails to fulfil the precept in the most perfect manner does not thereby transgress it.* To avoid transgression it is sufficient to fulfil the law of charity in some way, as is done by beginners. The perfection of divine love enters wholly and entirely into the object of the precept; even the perfection of heaven is not excluded, since it is the end to which all must tend. But transgression of the precept can be avoided, attaining in a certain imperfect degree the perfection of charity.

The lowest degree of the love of God consists in loving nothing *more than God*, or *contrary to God*, or *as much as God;* he who has not this degree of perfection does not fulfil the precept at all. There is, on the other hand, a degree of love which can never be realized here below and which consists in loving God with all our strength, in such wise that our love tends *always actually* towards Him.

[7] *Ibid.* Reply to 2nd obj.

This perfection is only possible in heaven and so one does not transgress the precept by the fact of not attaining the middle degrees of perfection so long as one arrives at the lowest degree.[8]

It follows from this that the precept of the love of God cannot be *perfectly observed* on earth; nevertheless on earth a perfect charity is within our power. From the fact that there are three ways of loving God with the whole heart, and that one of them, the third, is the exclusive heritage of the blessed, this precept clearly remains partly impossible for us on earth. It is not less evident that he who has ordinary charity observes it already; but he who rises to a higher level observes it still better. Above these degrees of charity of the present life there is heaven, where alone its perfect and complete fulfilment is attained.

It is necessary, therefore, to distinguish between the perfect and the imperfect practice of the precept of charity. But we should note also that he who remains in the lowest degree does not fulfil the

[8] *Summ. Theol.*, IIa, IIae, q. 184, a. 3, ad. 2. One may compare these beautiful words of the holy Doctor with his *Comm. on the Epistle to the Ephesians*, c. III, lect. 2: "There is a twofold perfection, that of heaven and that of the way which leads to it. The perfection of man consists in his union with God by charity; everything being perfect according to the measure in which it fulfils its end. Now the soul is thus united to God, first because it refers actually all its actions to Him and knows Him as He deserves to be known, and this is the union of souls with God in heaven; secondly, when *the soul directs its whole life to Him, which can be in two ways*: One is of obligation and necessary for salvation, which banishes all contrary love from the heart. The other is of supererogation, whereby the soul gives itself to God more unreservedly than is common to the rank and file, turning itself from the goods of this life in order to love better those of the celestial country. Because the weaker concupiscence becomes in us, so much the stronger does divine love grow." Cf. S. Francis of Sales, *Treatise of the Love of God*, I, X, C. VI.

supreme commandment in its full perfection; he does not observe fully all that is demanded by the law of love: Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy *whole* heart, with thy *whole* soul, with *all* thy strength and with *all* thy mind.

From this it is evident what an illusion it is to think that only imperfect charity is of precept and that all degrees, the highest to the lowest, are of counsel. They fall under the precept, if not as something to be fulfilled at once, at least as something to which we must aspire. The charity of heaven itself is commanded as the end to which each soul must advance during its earthly pilgrimage, and even run according to the advice of the apostle (1 *Cor.* ix. 24) without loss of her allotted time. Purgatory is for those who have not used sufficiently well their time of trial on earth. Those who die in a state of grace without having made good use of their time on earth, go there in order that they may be perfectly purified and learn to know how to desire ardently the vision of God.

It is thus in the order of nature. It is sufficient to be a child to belong to the human race, but that is not enough to be a perfect man. The child must grow according to physical laws, otherwise it will be a deformed dwarf: in the same way it suffices to have the lowest degree of charity in order to avoid transgressing the precept of love, but that is not enough to fulfil it perfectly. Still more, if the beginner does not increase in charity he does not remain a beginner, any more than he remains a child while growing older, but he becomes abnormal or like a dwarf from the spiritual point of view. There is a disproportion between his spiritual life in its embryonic stage and his natural talents, which

perhaps become fully cultivated and developed; the equilibrium, so to speak, is disturbed and the divine seed in him runs the risk of perishing for want of nourishment[9] (parable of the Sower).

One may then conclude quite safely that charity is not only counselled but *commanded*, as the end to which all Christians must tend, if not by the practice of the counsels, at least in their spirit by increasing always in charity. The precept of love has no limit, it does not stop at a certain degree beyond which it becomes a counsel. We are commanded to grow in it continually without ceasing. God, who is the infinite Good, merits to be loved without measure, as much as possible, and always more and more; that is what the Saints do, who alone fulfil perfectly this great law, which is the soul of the Christian life.

III. Consequences

First Consequence. The precept of charity requiring at least the lowest degree; all that is incompatible with this degree is equally incompatible with the perfection of charity.

(*a*) It follows that perfection requires at least the fulfilment of grave precepts. Violation of these precepts constitutes *mortal sin*, and the immediate effect of this is to turn the soul from its last end, to separate it from God and so destroy charity. There is absolute incompatibility between mortal sin and the perfect life.

(*b*) It is not the same with *venial sin*. For this does not absolutely turn the soul from its end, it

[9] Garrigou-Lagrange, *op. cit.*, pp. 223-226. Cf. S. Thomas, *Summ. Theol.*, IIa, IIae, q. 184, a. 3, ad. 3m.

only weakens it and retards its course.[10] We must, however, distinguish between what we usually call faults of frailty and habitual, wilful and premeditated venial sins. The first are not irreconcilable with perfection, and even the most perfect souls are not entirely free from them. No doubt these faults of fragility hinder charity and in the same measure raise an obstacle to perfection; but charity, impeded and held back for a moment, soon regains its ground and repairs its fault. "The just man," Holy Scripture says, "falls seven times and rises again" (*Prov.* xxiv. 16).

The habit of wilful venial sin is always contrary to perfection. Perfection indeed consists in an active charity, which implies the desire and disposition to approach God ardently, diligently and frequently. It is clear from this that the habit of wilful venial sin, especially if it increases the habitual disposition to commit with unconcern faults which do not bring loss of grace and charity, is incompatible with perfection: the soul thus disposed lacks the ardour, diligence and promptitude required by perfection. Nevertheless a venial fault, even if premeditated and fully consented to, if committed rarely does not seem to exclude altogether perfection. Charity impeded in one way may keep its power and activity in other ways.

(*c*) Growth even to death is a law of charity for the Christian. Consequently to stop this development is to go against the principle of the love of God, and it is in this sense we must explain the well-known saying: "In the way of God, he who does not advance, recedes." If the road does not rise, it descends. The soul cannot live without love; if

[10] Cf. *Vie Spirituelle,* XI, pp. 429-434.

she ceases to love God she falls into the love of self. This is the danger of *what are called imperfect acts.*

But what is an imperfect act? As the word indicates, it is an act which lacks perfection or at least that degree of intensity of perfection that it ought to have. Suppose an act of charity equals thirty degrees, and yet there are only twenty degrees in the act which I accomplish. This act is imperfect, as the work of a scholar who does not make use of all the knowledge he possesses. We say: he could have done better. It is the same with our imperfect acts, they could be better, which means that they are not up to the level of the degree of charity actually possessed.

What is to be said of these imperfect acts?

(1) Being good in themselves with a real supernatural goodness, they are good and meritorious since they proceed from charity. But S. Thomas teaches—and in this the best theologians follow him—that they do not obtain at once an increase of grace or charity, any more than the scholar gains anything in knowledge by his imperfect work, which is below the level of what he already knows. They only obtain this increase when we make a more fervent act, equal or superior to the degree of our virtue.[11]

(2) Not only do these imperfect acts which lack that degree of charity they ought to possess fail to obtain an immediate increase of charity, they *mark a real deficiency*: in the sense that a soul in its journey towards perfection and eternal life should progress continually. If it remains stationary, it is like a child whose growth is retarded.

[11] *Summ. Theol.*, IIa, IIae, q. 24, a. 6. *Ibid.*, Ia, IIae, q. 114, a. 8, ad. 3um.

(3) Finally, these acts *dispose us to lose ground.* The same is to be said of them, though in a less degree, that we said regarding venial sins. They allow disordered inclinations to revive afresh, such as lead to venial sin, and may end by overcoming us to such an extent that they tend to eternal death. Thus, by these imperfect acts as by venial sins, the radiance and influence of charity is lessened owing to obstacles which surmount it, and the soul weakens, even as the memory and intelligence become atrophied when we do not use them at all, or only use them very listlessly. A soul which remains contented in the presence of such acts becomes soon a *belated* soul. And how many such *belated* souls end by becoming lukewarm souls, idle, and careless! In time they may grow hardened, and it seems far more difficult to recall them to a fervent life than to obtain the conversion of a great sinner.[12]

Second Consequence. The axiom that "he who does not advance, recedes" leads us to treat more fully of the *continual progress of charity*, of which the law may be thus expressed:

All Christians, each according to his state, ought to tend to the perfection of charity. It is for them a general obligation, not a special one as for priests and religious.[13]

According to the etymology of the word, to be

[12] Cf. Garrigou-Lagrange, *op. cit.*, I, pp. 228, 229. *Vie Spirituelle*, XI, pp. 326-334.

[13] Let us be quite clear. It is certain that in order to be saved it is necessary and it suffices to die in a state of grace. It seems, then, that for the faithful there is no other strict obligation than to continue in a state of grace. But the precise question is whether one can continue long in a state of grace without striving to make progress. This is the question to which we have replied by saying there is an obligation to aspire to perfection.

" perfect "—completely made (per-fectum)—is to be a being complete in the perfection which belongs to its nature. From this definition it follows that man is not perfect either naturally or supernaturally, but he is capable of perfection.

Man is not perfect *naturally*, since his capacity for knowing and loving is without a fixed limit; he is not perfect *supernaturally*, because in the supernatural order, perfection for him consists in attaining to his end, which is God and union with God. Charity, indeed, which has God for its direct object, unites us to Him as to our last end, without an intermediary.

In heaven, where God, the infinite Good, shall reveal Himself as He is to the soul, the will will cling to Him with an irresistible attraction and can never again be separated from Him. Union with God will be a ceaseless exercise of vision and of love, from which the soul will gain an uninterrupted peace, in the possession of its end—a state of perfect beatitude, without any possibility of falling away. " In this state," says S. Thomas, " union with God is accomplished by a unique act, *continuous* and eternal."[14]

During our life of probation, God being only presented to us by those ephemeral and fragmentary good things which reflect very imperfectly His Sovereign Goodness, the will is enticed and drawn away by divers attractions and the interior life is subject to inevitable fluctuations *which hinder its continuity*.[15]

Also earthly perfection is never more than relative.

[14] S. Thomas, *Summ. Theol.*, Ia, IIae, q. 3, a. 2, ad. 4m.
[15] Cf. S. Thomas, *Summ. Theol*, Ia, IIae, q. 3, a. 2, ad. 4m. Cardinal Mercier, *La Vie Intérieure*, p. 81 *sqq*.

It does not consist in a continual unitive action, but in a habitual disposition, a fundamental power or tendency to be united to God.

Here we may pause to ask whether this habitual disposition, this fundamental tendency to live united to God, is of obligation to the Christian. We reply in the affirmative. The Christian is *bound* to tend to the perfection of charity according to the general obligation of the first precept; and this perfection will consist in having a will constantly tending to God.

The soul will put this obligation into practice first by avoiding mortal sin and even venial sin: then in keeping the *spirit of the counsels*, without straining after the things which are beyond its condition. The counsels indeed form part of perfection as means, inasmuch as they remove the obstacles which are opposed to it. It is necessary, then, to join to the fulfilment of the precepts—which may not be violated without sin—the practice of the counsels, of some at least, those enjoined by the duties of our state.

" Those who possess and observe the commandments," says S. Catherine of Siena, " only observe the counsels spiritually. But since the counsels are allied to the commandments no one can observe the latter without also fulfilling the counsels, at least spiritually. If one possess all the riches of the world, it is possible to possess them with humility . . . and in detachment of heart."[16] The spirit of poverty for Christians in the world consists in that. Even married people practise chastity spiritually in using moderately and with restraint the legitimate pleasure of the married state, and especially in

[16] *Dialog.*, Ch. XLVII, trans. Hurtaud, Vol. I, p. 158.

avoiding all that is forbidden and dangerous; they have the spirit of obedience if they submit with docility to their lawful superiors in whom they recognize the representatives of God, to the inspirations of grace, under the guidance of a wise director.

If the Christian generously follows this way, he will be called, even in an intimate and efficacious way, to a high state of perfection, to which even married persons may aspire. There is then no exception to this rule, it is general: *all* ought to grow in charity, each according to his vocation and state of life.

This doctrine is founded on *Holy Scripture* and *the teaching of the Doctors of the Church.* It is true that Holy Scripture does not treat directly of this question, but it insists strongly on the holiness required of all Christians. It puts before them such a high ideal of perfection that every discerning person must see that in order even to save one's soul it is necessary at certain times to do more than is strictly necessary and so exert oneself to make progress.

Our Lord also puts before us as our ideal of perfection His Eternal Father Himself. "*Be ye perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect*" (*Matt.* v. 48).

All therefore who have God for their Father ought to strive after this divine perfection, which can only be attained by degrees. The whole Sermon on the Mount is indeed only a development of and commentary upon this ideal.

In the same sense, S. Peter writes for all the faithful: "Wherefore laying aside all malice and all guile and dissimulations and envies and all detractions, as new-born babes desire the rational

milk without guile that thereby *you may grow* unto salvation, if so be you have tasted that the Lord is sweet" (1 *Peter* ii. 1, 2). "*But grow in grace* and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (2 *Peter* iii. 18).

S. Paul repeats the same teaching: "doing the truth in charity, *we may in all things grow up in him*, who is the Head, even Christ" (*Ephes.* iv. 15). "Therefore we also from the day we heard of it, cease not to pray for you and to beg that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding: that you may walk worthy of God in all things pleasing; being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God: strengthened with all might according to the power of his glory in all patience and longsuffering with joy" (*Coloss.* i. 9-10). "Wherefore, leaving the word of the beginning of Christ, let us go on to things more perfect" (*Heb.* vi. 1).

Third Consequence. S. Thomas, commenting on this last text of S. Paul, writes: "In judging himself, no man ought to esteem himself perfect; he ought to be always as one striving to rise higher according to the word of the Apostle: 'Not as though I had already attained, or were already perfect'" (*Phil.* iii. 12). As for the progress to be attained, man should always strive to arrive at perfection; for as S. Bernard says, "in the way of God, not to advance is to go back. . . ." This does not mean that all are bound to some sort of exterior perfection, such as, for example, voluntary poverty and virginity. . . . But *all* must aspire to the interior perfection of charity, because if anyone refused to go on loving God more and more, he would be

wanting in what charity requires.[17] "He who does not desire to become better cannot help but despise what is worthy of all respect."[18]

Long before S. Thomas, S. Augustine, in pointing out that charity is active, warns us that we must not stop short on the way, precisely because to stop is to go back: *retro redit qui ad ea revolvitur unde jam recesserat.*[19]

S. Bernard gives us the same teaching in a very striking form: "You do not desire to progress? No. You wish to go back? Not at all. What do you desire then? I desire to live so that I always remain at the point to which I have attained. What you desire is impossible, because nothing in this world remains in the same state."[20]

And elsewhere he says: "It is necessary to go up or come down; if one stops one must most certainly fall."[21]

Finally—since one must come to an end—S. Francis of Sales, especially in his *Treatise on the Love of God*, comes back several times to the question of progress in the life of perfection. Here is a very characteristic passage: "If you would follow Christ you must go on and run always; because He never stopped, but continued His course of love and obedience even to the death of the Cross." Go on then, says S. Bernard, go with Him and have no boundaries but those of your life. True virtue has no limit, it goes always farther, but especially charity, the virtue of virtues, which,

[17] In *Epist. ad. Heb.*, VI, 1.
[18] In *Matt.* xix. 12. Cf. *Summ. Theol.*, IIa, IIae, q. 186, a. 2, ad. 2um.
[19] *Serm.* CLXIX, n. 18.
[20] *Epist.* 254. *Ad Abbatem Suarinum*, n. 4.
[21] *Epist.* XCI. *To the Abbots assembled at Soissons*, n. 3.

having an infinite object, will be capable of becoming infinite. Nothing prevents love from being infinite except the condition of the will of him who receives it and who should act in accordance with it. By reason of this condition no one can love God as much as He ought to be loved; the heart which could love God with a love equal to the Divine Goodness would have a will infinitely good, and that can only be God Himself.

Charity, then, in us may be perfected even to infinity, but in an exclusive sense; that is, charity may become more and more, and ever more, excellent, yet never infinite. . . . Meanwhile it is a very great honour, granted to our souls that they are capable of growing more and more in the love of their God, so long as they shall live in this failing life."[22]

Thus, for S. Francis of Sales, "true virtue, in particular charity, has no limit"; it is indeed a great favour conferred upon us, but it is also a duty; one must "go forth without reaching an end other than that of life." Because life is the road and we are all "on the road; and the road is not made to sit down upon, but to walk on."[23]

This, in fact, is nothing more than the expression of Christian good sense based on everyday experience. All life is movement therefore, essentially progressive, in the sense that it begins to fail as soon as it ceases to grow. It is easy to grasp the reason: in every living organism there are forces of disintegration which end by producing sickness and death if they are not checked. It is the same in our spiritual life. Side by side with influences

[22] *Treatise on the Love of God*, I, III, Ch. I.
[23] *Ibid.*

which lead to good there are other very active ones which incline us to evil. (The old man and the new man of whom S. Paul speaks.) The only efficacious means of overcoming them is to increase in our souls a living force, that of the love of God and the Christian virtues; evil tendencies will then soon die down. But if the efforts to advance cease, the evil instincts and bad habits awake, reviving their strength and attacking us more violently and more often than before. Soon, unless we arouse ourselves by sudden efforts, the time comes when, falling away time after time, we at length commit mortal sin.

This a strictly theological conclusion: "It is almost morally impossible," says Suarez, "for a man, even living in the world, to have a firm purpose of avoiding mortal sin if he does not, for this end, perform works of supererogation, or if he has not a formal, or at least a virtual intention of doing so."[24]

Such is the law of our spiritual life, the law of progress and of advancement towards the perfection of the Christian life; a general law which knows no exception: All Christians, says Pope Pius XI plainly in his Encyclical (January 26,[25] 1923) on S. Francis of Sales, must aspire to holiness; "Tenentur enim hac lege *mines*, nullo excepto."

But we must not allow ourselves to be alarmed at the seriousness of this obligation. God, as S. Francis of Sales reminds us, never asks what is impossible.

"God," he writes, "has ordained that we should employ our whole endeavours to obtain holy virtues:

[24] *Treatise on the Love of God*, I, III, Ch. I.
[25] *De Religione*, I, I, Ch. IV, n. 12.

let us then forget nothing which might help our good success in this pious exercise. But after we have planted and watered, we know for certain that it is God who must give increase to the trees of our good inclinations and habits, and therefore from His Divine Providence we are to expect the fruits of our desires and labours, and if we find the progress and advancement of our hearts in devotion not so great as we should desire, let us not be troubled, let us live in peace, let tranquillity always reign in our hearts. It belongs to us diligently to train our souls, and therefore we must faithfully attend to the work; but as for the success of the crop or harvest, let us leave the care thereof to our Lord and Master. The husbandman will never be reprehended for not having a good harvest, but only if he did not carefully till and sow his ground. Let us not be troubled at finding ourselves always novices in the exercise of virtues, for in the monastery of a devout life each one considers himself always a novice, and there the whole of life is meant as a probation; the most evident argument, not only that we are novices, but also that we are worthy of expulsion and reprobation, being, to esteem and hold ourselves professed. For according to the rule of this order, not the solemnity, but the accomplishment of the vows makes the novices professed, nor are the vows ever fulfilled while there remains yet something to be done for their observance; and the obligation of serving God and making progress in His love lasts always until death."

Here is assurance for timid, fearful souls.

"But after all," will someone say, "if I know that it is by my own fault my progress in virtue is so slow, how can I help being grieved and disquieted?"

" . . . Humble yourself before God, implore His mercy, fall prostrate before the face of His goodness and demand pardon, confess your fault, cry His mercy in the very ear of your confessor, so as to obtain absolution. But this being done, remain in peace, and having detested the offence, embrace lovingly the abjection which you feel in yourself by reason of delaying your advancement in good."[26]

Conclusion

From the study of this fundamental doctrine, we may draw this very practical and very important conclusion: to be content with little in the supernatural life, to be satisfied with what is common or ordinary is a great danger, which leads us to a life of routine, without desires other than earthly, full of accidents and even falls. To give up the ideal of sanctity to which we are called is to undervalue the abundant fruits of redemption. It is even to run a risk regarding our eternal salvation. We must advance towards perfection, and the way of perfection is open to us. We can and we ought to ask for perfection and to seek it; we can and ought to follow the road of sanctity, *the sure way*, with the ordinary help of grace. This is not presumption, but love, confidence, generosity, faithful correspondence with the gifts of God. " A very common temptation among the servants of God," says S. Surin,[27] " is to put a limit to love and to have very earthly, ungenerous ideas about the service of

[26] *Treatise on the Love of God*, I, IX, Ch. VII.
[27] *Amour de Dieu*, I, Ch. X.

God. That is why there are so few who profess to serve God and so few saints."

P. Rodriquez also recommends as a useful practice for our spiritual advancement to propose to ourselves the highest and best things as our object. For this is the advice of S. Paul (1 *Cor.* xii. 31): "Be ye zealous for the better gifts. And I show unto you a more excellent way." This is an extremely important means, because it is necessary to aim high if our actions are to come up to the standard required to fulfil our duty.[28]

By our correspondence with divine gifts new strength is imparted to us, and we are encouraged to go on advancing without growing weak and despondent under pretence of a false humility.

"Be not faint-hearted in thy mind," says *Ecclesiasticus* (vii. 9). And the prophet *Isaias* (xl. 31) states that: "They that hope in the Lord shall renew their strength. They shall take wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint." They shall progress from virtue to virtue and see God on the summit of His holy mountain.[29]

[28] *Prefection Chrétienne*, I, I, Ch. X.
[29] Cf. *La Vie Spirituelle*, February, 1920. *Du Désir de la Perfection*, P. Arnitaro, p. 296 *sqq*.

CHAPTER IV

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE SPIRITUAL LIFE

I. Stages of the spiritual life: (*a*) the purgative way; (*b*) the illuminative way; (*c*) the unitive way. II. Unity of the spiritual life: the mystical life, the normal development of the ascetic life. III. Limit of perfection here below.

THE progress of which we have been speaking, the advance from virtue to virtue, cannot be brought about suddenly, it comes to be progressively, by stages. Whosoever is in a state of grace, that is who has sanctifying grace and charity, already in a certain way, ranks among the perfect, in the sense that he is on the way which leads to and ends in perfection.

But he is not yet at the goal, he is separated by the distance between the germ of love and the fullness of union with God. Between these two points indeed, the point of departure, the simple habitual disposition for union with God infused into us in baptism, and the point of consummated union with God, there are an infinity of degrees. The soul in its journey towards God, its first principle, must pass through these various stages.

I. The Stages of the Spiritual Life

It would be impossible for us to enumerate all the degrees of the spiritual life; it will be sufficient to point out and explain the principal ones.

All the masters of the spiritual life, following S. Thomas, distinguish three stages in the supernatural life, or, as they are called, *three ways*: that of beginners, *incipientium*; that of souls who are making progress, *proficientium* or *progredientium*; that of the perfect, *perfectorum*. The stage of beginners is called the *purgative* way of life; that of the more advanced the *illuminative*; that of the perfect the *unitive*.

According to Cardinal Bona, these stages and terminology are taken from the pseudo-Denis, who, in the *Celestial Hierarchy*, reduces the hierarchical functions of the angels to three things: to purify, to illuminate, to perfect (Ch. III, n. 2). This division is found also in substance, among the doctors who speak of the movement of the soul towards God; especially by S. Augustine (*De Ordine*, 1, 2; *Conf.* 1, 13, *passim*); in S. Gregory the Great (*Moral*, 1, 24, Ch. VII); S. Bernard (*In Cant*: Serm. 3 and 4); in Hugh and Richard of S. Victor (*De Gradibus Charitatis*) and in S. Bonaventure (*Pharetra*, 1, I).

S. Thomas also expressly follows this division.

"In every human effort," he writes, "we can distinguish a beginning, a middle and a term; and consequently the state of spiritual servitude and freedom is differentiated according to these things, namely, the beginning—to which pertains the state of beginners—the middle, to which pertains the state of the proficient—and the term, to which belongs the state of the perfect."[1]

Since his time, this is the division most usually adopted. Pope Innocent XI condemned among other propositions of Molinos, that which declared absurd the division of the spiritual life into the

[1] S. Thomas, *Summ. Theol.*, IIa, IIae, q. 183, a. 4.

purgative, illuminative and unitive ways; there being, said he, only one way, the interior.[2]

We must then admit these three degrees of the spiritual life, a division which is likewise founded on the very nature of this life, which may justly be compared with the life of the body. "The growth of charity," says S. Thomas, "may be compared to the development of the human body."[3] Man passes successively through infancy, childhood and adolescence before attaining to maturity; deprived of reason in the early stages, he gradually becomes acquainted with the use of his faculties, before finding in the maturity of nature the full possession of all his energies. It is the same with the spiritual development of the soul, it is by successive degrees that it runs in the way of charity in order to arrive at perfection.

This perfection is intimate union with God. Before reaching it, it is necessary that the soul should be purified from its past faults, and fortified against those to come. "At the beginning the principal obligation imposed on man is to avoid sin and to resist the temptations of evil which move the soul in a sense contrary to charity."[4]

This is the work of beginners who are in the purgative way.

When the soul is purified and reformed, it must strive to grow in the practice of good works and to adorn itself with the Christian virtues, both moral and theological; then it becomes vigorous and already begins to effect union with God. Secondly the soul must make efforts to advance in good. This

[2] Propos. 26. Denz-Bann., No. 1246.
[3] S. Thomas, *Summ. Theol.*, IIa, IIae, q. 24, a. 9.
[4] *Ibid.*

is the work proper to *those who progress*, and whose chief endeavour should be to strengthen charity in their souls and cause it to grow."[5]

This is the *illuminative way*.

When at last, purified and reformed, made strong and supple, docile to the inspirations of the Holy Spirit, the soul aspires after nothing but union with God, whom she seeks everywhere, adhering to Him and rejoicing in His presence, then it is she attains to the unitive way. She has then arrived at the stage of the perfect, whose endeavour, says S. Thomas, is to aim at union with God, and to rejoice in Him and who long to be dissolved and to be with Christ.[6]

Such is the law of perfection in the soul and the growth of its life; it rises up towards God as a rule by infinitely varied and successive degrees, but which all fall inside these three stages of which we have just spoken, and each of which is distinguished by its own peculiar character and quality.

(*a*) *The purgative way*. The spiritual life does not begin until the soul has broken with mortal sin and regained grace and the love of God by justification. Until then she is in the barrenness of death. For, as S. Thomas remarks, the chief concern of the soul at this stage is to preserve the grace and charity which she already possesses.[7] She exerts herself therefore to avoid sin, above all, mortal sin. But at the beginning of this work the passions and evil concupiscences, quickened by the habit of sin and not yet overcome, are a menace to charity. It is necessary therefore to struggle painfully, in

[5] *Ibid.*
[6] S. Thomas, *Summ. Theol.*, IIa, IIae, q. 24, ad. 9m.
[7] *Ibid.*, q. 19, a. 8.

anguish, to escape the abyss. This is the reign of "fear"—the fear of beginners—which tortures and purifies the soul, and by redoubling vigilance, safeguards love.[8]

The purgative way, then, consists chiefly in purifying oneself of sin: "To be purged of our evil humours," says S. Francis of Sales, "is the beginning of health."[9]

This purification supposes and requires that we should destroy the causes of sin, by the extirpation of our vices and evil habits in their very source and principle, by an austere penitence and by the generous and constant practice of both interior and exterior mortification.

Thus is purity of heart acquired, which is an essential condition for seeing God (*Matt.* v. 8), here on earth as well as in a future life. But the subjection of our passions and purification from sin need not absorb all the efforts of our soul; we must also occupy ourselves in building up the edifice of our perfection, a work which requires both light and good will. For this reason prayer, meditation and the various spiritual exercises which enlighten the soul and strengthen the will belong especially to the purgative way. If in addition to this we practise the virtues, at least in their beginnings—virtues commanded by divine precept which have for their end to cleanse the heart from disorderly passions and to render the conscience more sensitive and to preserve the purity of faith, then we learn the three things which characterize the purgative way or the first stage of perfection.

[8] Ribet, *op. cit.*, p. 42.
[9] S. Francis of Sales, *Introduction to the Devout Life*, Part I, Ch. V.

(*b*) *The illuminative way.* At this second stage, the soul sets herself chiefly to cultivate and strengthen herself, to advance in virtue, and above all to build up charity. Those who advance in the interior life are called upon to practise with generosity the Christian virtues after the example of Jesus Christ. Like Him, their meat is to do the will of their Father in heaven, who asks of them to be perfect, even as He is perfect. This evidently implies a constant advancement in the practice of virtue.

From all this we may easily understand the character of this state. The passions being purified, the soul, tranquil as regards the senses and motions of sin, is consequently more open to the divine light and the love of God; it loves to follow Jesus step by step, to copy His virtues and to reproduce His interior dispositions. The habitual contemplation of our Lord, of the great truths and of eternal good, produce in the mind a light and radiance which, while revealing to us the beauty of the supernatural world, ends by detaching us from earthly things and draws us to the exercise of virtue. Where one walks in the light the way is lit up (hence the illuminative way) with hope and divine teaching.

It will be easily understood also that of the virtues required in this state, and its development, faith and hope predominate, especially hope, that is, the assurance that God calls us to that end where we shall find happiness, and that His grace will never fail us in our efforts to arrive there.

To sum up, the illuminative way is characterized, on the one hand, by the actual progress made and the desire to progress and to reach forward to perfection by the practice of supernatural virtues,

after the example of Jesus Christ; on the other hand, by the abundant light wherewith the soul is illuminated. We may also say that contemplation begins here, although the illuminative way is not a purely contemplative state. According to S. John of the Cross, " all those are called beginners who still exercise themselves (exclusively) in meditation. When God raises them to a state of contemplation, He conducts them into the way of the more advanced."[10] Meditation is certainly not excluded from the illuminative way, nor even from the unitive way. Nevertheless, with S. John of the Cross, who agrees in this with S. Thomas and the great mystics, we must recognize in the illuminative way the beginning of contemplation. To see is the mark of those who progress.[11]

(*c*) *The unitive way.* In this last degree the soul looks for nothing but God; her constant preoccupation is *to hold fast to God and to find in Him her delight.*

By looking upon God as the end of her life and upon Jesus as her guide, the soul becomes enamoured of the divine sweetness and perfections; she unites herself to her Saviour in such wise that the divine will becomes the moving principle of her life. Fear has passed away: hope, so far as self is concerned, becomes dormant, love triumphs and dominates all. The soul then ceases to belong to herself, in order to belong wholly to God whom she loves. She is on the way still, no doubt, and on this account she labours ceaselessly to acquire virtue, but, as S. Thomas says, " that is no longer her chief

[10] *The Obscure Night*, I, I, Ch. I.
[11] Cf. S. Thomas, *Opusc.*, LXI (Ed. Pom.), Ch. II. Denis the Carthusian, *De Contempl.*, I, I, a. 18, *De fonte lucis*, a. 8.

occupation; she strives above all to attach herself to God."[12] Her heart is at rest, reposing on the sole object of her love: after having "left the point of departure and arrived at her destination, she finds rest at the end of her voyage."[13] There we have the state of the perfect. "He is perfect," says S. Thomas, "who banishes from his heart all that hinders the soul from going straight to God; he is perfect who lives united to God and finds delight in Him only; he is perfect who follows no attraction but that of the Supreme Good, and desires ardently to go to repose with Christ in the bosom of the Father."[14]

To such souls earth seems an exile and, with S. Paul, they long to die and to join Jesus Christ. "O my Lord and my beloved Spouse," cried S. Teresa when receiving Holy Viaticum, "now has the long-desired time come. It is the time for us to see one another. A thousand times blessed be this happy hour, and may Thy will be done! May my soul go to be united with Thee, after having waited so long."[15] Such is the natural language of love: "when one loves, one longs to meet,"[16] and souls who have already arrived at the heights of the unitive way are, in very deed, consumed with love.

In practice, the soul in the unitive way acts somewhat as follows.[17] Already purified by trial and the practice of solid virtue, she enters into a more

[12] S. Thomas, *Summ. Theol.*, IIa, IIae, q. 24, a. 9, ad. 3m.
[13] *Ibid.*
[14] *Ibid.*
[15] *History of S. Teresa*, by a Carmelite of Caen, Vol. II, p. 412.
[16] S. Elizabeth of the Trinity, *Souvenirs*, p. 260.
[17] Meynard-Gerest, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp. 24-25.

intimate union with God, whom she sees in all things, even in the midst of the most absorbing occupations; her prayer is sublime, with a taste and relish for divine union. Her virtues are more perfect, sometimes even heroic. A characteristic of the perfect is to *relish* divine things, and in this celestial taste—the spiritual nourishment of the soul —we find three admirable things: hunger, feasting upon the divine food, and the enjoyment of this infinite good. The soul's hunger is unsatiable. " They that eat me shall yet hunger " (*Eccles.* xxiv. 29), which satiety does not satisfy, but continually renews the need, because the more we relish divine things, the better we know and love them. The soul feasts because of its attentive contemplation of the divine model, which is the source of generous effort to walk in the footsteps of the saints and to profit by the immense blessings which flow from the Incarnation; and lastly, the soul enjoys a spiritual delight of a very high order, which fills it with ineffable sweetness, the very foretaste of heaven.

We see by this résumé of the three states that the desire after perfection in each one is the same as regards charity, only the determining motive is different.[18] In the beginning fear, then hope, finally pure love.

This is the common normal way; the soul passes successively from purification to illumination, and

[18] As Card. Mercier remarks, the criterion by which we may judge of these three stages is not greater or less frequency of the acts of love, because frequency has regard only to their number, but tells us nothing of their quality. The principle of the classification of the states of perfection concerns the *quality* of the acts, and their degree of elevation and the relative purity of the habitual motive of the will in loving. *Vie Intérieure*, p. 89.

from illumination to union. These laws, however, are not absolute.

God, by His all-powerful grace, can suddenly raise a soul from the depths of sin to the transports of hope and the highest summit of charity. " S. Paul," says S. Francis of Sales, " was in a moment cleansed with a perfect purification, as was also S. Catherine of Genoa, S. M. Magdalen, S. Pelagia and others, but this purification is altogether miraculous and extraordinary in grace, even as the resurrection of the body in nature."[19]

" On the other hand, Divine Providence, wise and merciful even in its rigour, may keep the most pure soul in dread of judgement and in the bitterness of fear. The general law, nevertheless, is that purification and healing, whether of the body or the soul, is usually accomplished little by little, progressing stage by stage slowly and with effort."[20]

There is another point to be noticed: there is nothing mathematical or distinctly marked in the division of the three ways. They are not so separate that the characteristics of one do not appear in the others. As M. Tanquerey[21] very truly remarks, " one passes imperceptibly into another, so that it is impossible to fix any barrier between them. How shall it be known whether a soul is still in the purgative way, or in the early stage of the illuminative? There is a neutral ground, common to them both, to which no limit can be exactly fixed. Sometimes, too, the progress is not sustained, it is a vital movement, with its various alternations,

[19] S. Francis of Sales, *Introduction to the Devout Life*, Part I, Ch. V.
[20] *Ibid.*
[21] *Op. cit.*, p. 403.

ebbing and flowing, sometimes advancing, sometimes receding, at certain times even appearing to mark time, and without appreciable progress."

The degrees of the spiritual life must not therefore be regarded as like so many ruled squares or as compartments separated by air-tight partitions; life cannot be thus compressed or restrained.

When we speak of the purgative, illuminative or unitive ways, it is merely to signify what predominates in a soul at a particular moment of its development. Fundamentally, all the virtues belong to each of the ways, but in a different degree. It is true that in the purgative way the soul struggles chiefly against violent temptations and the fear of hell, and exercises herself in penitence; that it runs under the impulse of hope in the illuminative way and that it practises disinterested love in the unitive way. Throughout our whole life, no matter how high a point of perfection we may have attained, the practice of the theological and cardinal virtues are necessary but in a different way according to the state of a beginner, a more advanced or a proficient, but always these virtues must be practised with generosity and perseverance. Thus, for example, according to S. Francis of Sales, "the exercise of the purification of soul should only end with life";[22] and that the *perfect* even, while applying themselves mainly to the love of God, do not cease to purify their souls by penance and mortification, with which they season the practice of the most pure and intense love.

[22] *Introduction to the Devout Life*, Part I, Ch. V.

II. Unity of the Spiritual Life

It would seem that the soul, once introduced into the way of the Christian life, endowed with grace and all the infused gifts which accompany it, has only to pursue its course in order to reach the most sublime heights of divine union.

Is this so?

By way of answer, we must distinguish in this threefold course two phases, the ascetical and the mystical, which for convenience sake, we will call the ascetical and the mystical life.

The first, which includes the purgative way and, at least in part,[23] the illuminative, is marked, as its name indicates, by the works and purification of the "Ascèse"; without excluding the acts of the theological virtues, the soul applies herself chiefly to the avoidance of sin, and the practice of the moral virtues. It is the *human mode* or imperfect phase; the influence of the gifts of the Holy Spirit is still latent and, by this very fact, the exercises of virtue are of a mediocre character, so that in many cases they appear not much superior to the ordinary natural virtues.

In the mystical phase the soul finds itself under the dominating influence of the gifts of the Holy Ghost; its chief occupation and desire, then, is to unite itself to God by the theological virtues and others, but in a more perfect manner. Thanks to the florescence of the gifts of the Holy Ghost, the

[23] Some authors make this mystical life begin from the illuminative way; others place all the illuminative in the ascetical life.

soul is moved by a higher influence on the part of God, and the acts which she performs are much more perfect than those of the ordinary virtues.

This is the *superhuman mode* of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Whence it is clear that the mystical life is simply the full expansion of the virtues and gifts of the Holy Spirit in the soul.

The question now arises concerning the relations which exist between these two kinds of life. Is one the extension of the other, so that the passage from one to another is brought about insensibly, gradually and infallibly? In other words, is the mystical life the normal development of the interior or ascetical life, and consequently are all souls in a state of grace called thereto?

It is well known how many disputes, sometimes bitter and impassioned, have arisen on the question of the call to the mystical life, or more exactly, as to what constitutes the chief characteristic of this life of infused contemplation. Many books and articles have been written in recent years with a view to solve this question; but in spite of these studies (many of them of great worth), it does not seem as if a definite, incontestable solution has yet been arrived at.

We have no desire to enter on this discussion, but it would be well to define our position, and we explain briefly how we understand this unity of the spiritual life of which we are speaking.

We believe then, to quote the words of a contemporary author, that between the ascetical and mystical life there exists only a difference of degree, that of the imperfect from the perfect, in one and the same spiritual life. There is no break in the continuity of the two phases of this life. The

mystical life springs forth from the full ascetical life from an element which sanctifying grace contains in a state of "ligature." This element is none other than the gifts of the Holy Ghost which, in the ascetical phase, come into play in a latent and transitory way, but in the mystical phase more manifestly and more frequently. In other words, the soul already possesses in the ascetical life the germ of all that is needed to conduct her to perfect union; she can consequently aspire to the mystical life and look upon it as the *regular* and *normal* development of her supernatural life on earth.[24]

Such is the logical conclusion regarding the doctrine of the structure of the spiritual life. The root and principle of this life is common to the mystical life and the ordinary interior life. These gifts, as habitual dispositions which render us docile to the inspirations of the Holy Spirit,[25] grow, like the infused virtues, with charity. When in a really generous and fervent soul, they attain their full development, they bring the soul more and more under the immediate direction of the Holy Ghost; and the superhuman mode of action, which is proper to them, subordinates more and more also the human mode of its activity; the supra-human ends by predominating, and the soul thus finds itself introduced into and placed in the passive or mystic state.

Thus the principle of the ordinary interior life contains the germ of the mystical life; it is then called upon, in virtue of the law inherent in this life, to develop and expand in this superior form

[24] Rev. P. Yves de Mohon, O.M.C., *Le don de Sagesse*, introd., pp. 22-25.

[25] Cf. Part II, Ch. IV, § III, *The Gifts of the Holy Ghost*.

which is here below as the flower of the supernatural life.[26]

All this sufficiently proves the unity and homogeneous character of our spiritual life; it grows and expands by virtue of the seed received in its birth, which germinates in the soul and by its vital principle produces the flower and full expression of the mystical life. We say this must be the case, by way of stating a general law concerning the unity of the spiritual life; and on this ground we place the matter and leave it there.

The fact that many fervent and faithful souls never attain to the mystical life is one which may be explained in many ways and does not affect the principle. Some temperaments and some states of life are more suited than others to the contemplation proper to the mystical life. Contemplation is always a gratuitous gift, which God gives to whom and when He wills, but it is the way of God to adapt His graces to the temperament and state of life of each.

One may also, as do many excellent authors, distinguish between the mystical life and mystical contemplation and admit that without being raised to contemplation, many generous and faithful souls, though of a naturally active turn of mind, attain to the mystical life, that is to say, they are under the direct influence of the gifts of counsel, of strength, of fear, etc., which, properly speaking, belong to the active life.

[26] For example, M. J. Maritain, *Vie Spirituelle*, VIII, pp. 636-650; an article reproduced by P. Garrigou-Lagrange in *Perfection Chrétienne et Contemplation*, II, pp. 58-71; *Revue d'Ascétique et Mystique*, IV, pp. 338-340. Cf. Yves de Mohon, *op. cit.*, introd., p. 23, n. 1. It seems that M. Tanquerey also adopts this distinction, *op. cit.*, p. 979.

Contemplation, as M. Tanquerey[27] justly remarks, is not indeed sanctity, but only one of the most efficacious means of attaining to it. Sanctity consists in charity, in intimate and habitual union with God. Contemplation may well be, in itself, a short cut for the attainment of this union, but it is not the only one, there are souls incapable of contemplation who "may be more advanced in virtue and in true charity than others who have received more quickly the gift of infused contemplation."[28]

This is sufficient to reassure such souls, and also to reassure us, regarding the practical consequences of the doctrine referred to, and we may sum up in this statement: though all souls in a state of grace do not attain to the mystical life and are not actually called to it, yet we may say that all, by virtue of their supernatural equipment, could arrive at it and are called to it in a more remote way.

Therefore we may rightly infer the perfect unity and homogeneity of the spiritual life.

III. The Limits of Perfection on Earth

When one reads the lives of great saints, especially of great contemplatives, one is amazed to see to what sublime heights God can raise a generous soul which refuses Him nothing. Does it mean that perfection can increase indefinitely so as to attain absolute perfection?

No; there is a limit to our perfection here, a limit which we could not pass without falling back to a lower degree, or even into sin—the sin of pride.

[27] *Op. cit.*, p. 977.
[28] P. Garrigou-Lagrange, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 98.

(1) The absolute perfection of charity, S. Thomas says, is to love God *as much as He can be loved.* Now God is infinitely lovable; love carried to this extreme would be an infinite love and would surpass the capacity of our finite heart even in heaven, just as it surpasses the capacity of the angels. One may always try to love more, and according to S. Bernard the measure of loving God is to love Him without measure, but this must be understood with the above restriction.

(2) Thus to love God is to love Him within the limit of our strength, without faltering, without interruption, and in this consists all the perfection of love of which the soul itself is capable. But this supreme degree is only attained in heaven. On earth it is impossible to love God without interruption or failing—the perfection of charity without any variation is not for this world. It is possible, it is true, with special grace which is not refused to souls of good will, to avoid all deliberate, wilful, venial sin, but not all faults of frailty. S. Thomas writes: "Those who are perfect in this life are said to be so in spite of many things, by reason of venial sins which are consequent upon the frailty or infirmity of this present life."[29]

On this score such people have some imperfection in comparison with the perfection of heaven. Here below no one is impeccable.

This is the doctrine defined by the Church, first against the Beghards, and afterwards against Molinos.

(*a*) The Beghards, heretics of the thirteenth century, held strange doctrines on the spiritual life, which, summed up in eight propositions, was

[29] *Summ. Theol.*, IIa, IIae, q. 184, a. 2.

solemnly condemned by the Council of Vienne (1311).[30]

The following propositions concern the question of which we are treating: "Man is capable in this present life of acquiring such a degree of perfection as to become incapable of sin, and can increase no further in grace. Otherwise, they say, he could become more perfect than Jesus Christ" (prop. 1).

Thence they conclude: "He who shall have attained to this degree of perfection need neither pray nor fast, because, in this state, the senses are so completely subjected to the mind and reason that a man may freely accord to his body all that it desires (prop. 2). He is no longer subject to human obedience, or obliged to fulfil the precepts of the Church (prop. 3); or even to practise certain acts of virtue because such things are necessary only for the imperfect, and a perfect soul can dispense with them" (prop. 6).[31]

Under pretext of perfection such doctrines make in a direct line for immorality, and one can well understand why the Church has condemned them. It is quite clear from the condemnation of the first proposition that in this life no one can attain absolute perfection or impeccability.

(*b*) Molinos,[32] in the seventeenth century, renewed the errors of the Beghards. He taught that, by what he called acquired contemplation (but in which we can trace the characteristics of infused contemplation), the soul can arrive at such a degree of

[30] *Ibid.*, ad. 2 um.

[31] Denziger-Bannwart, Nos. 471, 472, 473, 476. Cf. Pourrat, *La Spiritualité Chrétienne*, Vol. II, pp. 327, 328.

[32] On this question, see *Dudon Le Quiétiste Espagnol*, Michael Molinos (1628-1696), Paris, 1921; Pourrat, *La Spiritualité Chrétienne*, Vol. IV, pp. 205-220.

perfection, that, completely purified, it is no longer subject to passions and becomes incapable of venial sin. By this means the soul attains to complete rest and to imperturbable peace; this is the state of mystic death, in which the soul can no longer will except what God wills, its own having been taken away. One may guess the result. In this state of contemplation the soul must be indifferent to all things, even to its salvation; there is no occasion to strive against temptation or the most impure imaginations; the acts which result therefrom are the work of the devil, and the soul is not responsible. These are the passive purifications which even the saints have experienced; and it is by these that perfect purity and intimate union with God are attained.

The conduct of Molinos also corresponded with his teaching, so that the condemnation of November 19, 1687, fell at the same time on the doctrine and its author.[33]

(3) Neither can we on earth love God constantly, or even habitually, with a perfectly disinterested love, which excludes all acts of hope. It is necessary from time to time to make acts of hope, no matter to what degree of perfection we may have arrived. We cannot therefore, as Molinos says, "be indifferent to all things, even to our salvation and sanctification, and give up hope in order that our love may be disinterested" (prop. 12).

There are some saints of both sexes who, it is true, have for a moment acquiesced in their own reprobation: S. Paul would be "anathema" for his brethren; S. Mary Magdalen de Pazzi desired always to suffer, not to die; and others have declared that if it were God's will they should go to hell,

[33] Denziger-Bannwart, No. 1221, Dudon, *op. cit.*, p. 292.

they would throw themselves into it. But such expressions are hypothetical, called forth by the violence of love, and far from excluding it, are therefore subordinate to the will of God.

Such hypotheses are usually to be avoided, since God wills man to be saved. Love, indeed, need never exclude conformity to God's good pleasure, who wills our salvation: *haec est voluntas Dei sanctificatio vestra.*

God has placed His glory in the salvation of our soul in such a way that to will what God wills is to will the sanctification of souls, and to will their sanctification is to will their salvation.

Thus to will the glory of God, the will of God and our beatitude are inseparable things, since we give glory to God and fulfil His will by our salvation. The idea of beatitude should not then be separated from the love of God and from a passionate desire for His Glory.

" All Christians, in all states, are obliged to will and to desire, and to ask for explicitly their eternal salvation as a thing willed by God and that He wills us to desire for His glory."[34] This is exactly what we ask for in the Pater: *fiat voluntas tua sicut in cœlo et in terra.*

This traditional doctrine gave rise to the famous dispute known as *Quietism* which was the cause of serious opposition between the two most famous bishops of the time of Louis XIV—*Bossuet and Fénelon.*[35] One point alone, here, is of interest to us, *the question of pure love.*

For Fénelon the end of life is the purification of

[34] Article V of Thirty-six Articles of the Conferences of Issy.

[35] On the question of Quietism, see Pourrat, *Histoire de la Spiritualité*, Vol. IV, Ch. IX. There will be found, in addition to an impartial explanation, an ample bibliography.

love. At first our love is very full of self-interest and mingled with self-love, it must be purified and made more and more ethereal, subtle and disinterested. But to what extent must one go to effect this purification and disinterestedness? There lies the question. In his book the *Maxims of the Saints*, Fénelon distinguishes five different states of the love of God: (1) a purely servile love, which loves God not for Himself, but for His gifts; (2) the love of *pure concupiscence*, by which God is loved merely as the only possible means of happiness, which is a love regarding self only, without any other end; (3) the love of *hope*, in which the desire of our own felicity prevails over that of the glory of God. This love is not entirely interested because, though mingled with a beginning of love of God for Himself, yet its chief and dominating motive is self-interest; (4) an *interested* love, "love of charity, which is still mixed with some degree of self-interest, but which is the true love of justification, because the disinterested motive prevails"; (5) *pure love* or perfect charity, "which is without any mixture of self-interest. No fear of punishment or desire of reward have any part in this love." But Fénelon adds that there exists an habitual state of disinterested love, which excludes even the desire of salvation, that is to say, in this state of love nothing is desired save the glory of God—the soul attains such detachment from self that it does not even desire its own salvation; it desires only the glory of God for its own sake.

According to him there is even in this life an habitual pure love in which the desire of eternal salvation has no place. Bossuet replies:[36] "Dis-

[36] *Pastoral Instructions on the States of Prayer.*

interested love does not exist, or at least in which the soul can renounce its end; the love of God is always united to the desire of beatitude, and this desire is in the act of love a formal reason for loving God; consequently it is a motive which cannot be excluded without manifest illusion." In other words, we love God because God is our happiness and it is impossible to conceive the love of God apart from our beatitude.

Bossuet went too far, as he afterwards recognized. He had not clearly understood the specific motive of charity, namely the Sovereign Good loved with a love which does not *exclude* hope, but abstracts from it.

There are actual transitory movements of the love of God, free from all self-interest, movements of the soul which loves God for Himself independently of all personal views, but they do not constitute an habitual state.

Also the Church condemned the doctrine of Fénelon (November 12, 1699) in censuring twenty-three propositions taken from his book, *Maxims of the Saints*.[37] The following are those which have reference to this subject:

Prop. 1. " There is an habitual state of the love of God which is pure charity and without any mixture of self-interest. Neither the fear of punishment nor the desire of reward has any part in this love. God is no longer loved for the merit of it, nor for perfection, nor for the happiness found in loving Him."

Prop. 2. " In the state of contemplation or unitive life, all interested motives of fear and hope cease."

Prop. 5. " In the state of holy indifference,

[37] Denziger-Bannwart, Nos. 1327-1349.

nothing is desired for self, but all for God; the soul desires not to be perfect, nor blessed for its own interest, but it wills all perfection and beatitude so far as it pleases God to let her value these things by the action of His grace."

From this condemnation it follows, without doubt, that we cannot love God constantly or even habitually with a perfectly pure and disinterested love, which excludes all acts of hope. It is possible from time to time to make such acts of pure love without any thought of self, and consequently without actually hoping for or desiring heaven. Such was S. Teresa's act of love of which we read in her life in the Bollandists, tom. II, Ch. XXXI. "If I love Thee, O my Lord, it is not for the heaven Thou hast promised; if I fear to offend Thee, it is not on account of hell which threatens me; it is Thou alone, O Lord, who drawest me towards Thee; it is to see Thee nailed to the Cross, Thy body wounded, in the agony of death. And Thy love has so taken possession of my heart that even if there were no hell, I should fear Thee. Thou needest give me nothing to attract my love, because even if I did not hope as I do hope, I should love Thee as I do love Thee."

Such desires and words, which explain such an intense love, evidently escape the general rule laid down by S. Thomas: "If you could suppose it possible that God were not the Supreme Good of man there would be no longer any reason for loving Him."

Besides, absolutely disinterested love can only be expressed in rare and transitory acts; habitually we must have, as elsewhere in our love for God, a mixture of pure love and love of hope.

We love God for Himself because He is infinitely lovable, and we love Him also for our own sakes, because He is the source of happiness. These two motives are not contrary one to the other, because God has willed that we should find our happiness in loving Him and giving Him glory.

PART II

WORKERS AND HELPERS IN THE SPIRITUAL LIFE

The soul is the principal worker in the spiritual life; in the sense that the perfection which she seeks and to which she tends is her *own* perfection.

She cannot, however, attain to it by her own efforts; the supernatural is beyond her, and, left to herself, she could not even conceive of it, let alone reach it: her efforts would be altogether fruitless. She needs the help of God, who becomes, together with her, only in a far more perfect way, the *worker* in her life and perfection.

Grace is the germ and principle of this life. It is Christ Himself who, after having merited and acquired this grace for us, distributes it to us. On this account He is the foundation of our spiritual life. God having associated with Him His most holy Mother in the acquisition and distribution of grace, we shall always find her near to Him, exercising the rôle of *Universal Mediator* on our behalf.

Lastly, our spiritual life is one of incessant movement, and its law is one of continual progress. Movement requires a motive power: it is the Holy Spirit who enlightens, strengthens and directs the soul. Possessing God within herself, leaning firmly on the merits of Christ, led by the Holy Spirit, she can and ought to attain her end, which is union with God. No doubt many obstacles will obstruct her steps, but she will find, all along the way, many powerful aids to enable her to discover and surmount them.

CHAPTER I

GOD THE PRINCIPAL WORKER IN OUR SPIRITUAL LIFE

I. Indwelling of the Holy Trinity in us: (1) the presence of God in His creatures; (2) His indwelling in the souls of the just: (*a*) reality of this indwelling; (*b*) its manner: God is found there as a guest and a friend, as an object of knowledge and of love. II. Actual grace: (1) its nature; (2) its mode of action; (3) its necessity.

All that treats of our spiritual life belongs absolutely of its very essence to the supernatural; it is a participation of the divine nature. In this life the work of God preponderates. It is so at the outset, when he infuses into us the marvellous germ of grace; it is so also at the goal, where the seed blossoms fully in heaven; we know, too, that all the intermediate work of growth has been brought about by His fructifying action.

We see by all this that God is indeed the chief worker in our spiritual life. Therefore, now that we know what the spiritual life means, we must study His manner of working therein. This action of God is not one exercised from a distance as if He were far off from us. He exercises it *in* us, where He Himself dwells. Thence arise two questions:

I. Concerning the habitation of the Holy Trinity within us.

II. Concerning His action in our souls.

I. Habitation of the Holy Trinity within us

(1) *The presence of God* in His creatures.

S. Thomas has admirably summed up in a few lines the whole doctrine of the presence of God in His creatures. " God," says he, " is in all things by His essence, His power and His presence as *cause* in the effects which participate in His perfection. But beyond this general mode of presence, there is a more special one which belongs to the rational creature in whom God dwells as an *object known and loved*. And because in knowing and loving Him, the rational creature, by its operation, attains to God Himself, it is said, not only that God is *in* it, but that He *dwells* there as in His temple. It possesses Him since it can freely enjoy Him. This power proceeds from sanctifying grace, which is given us together with the Holy Ghost." [1]

There are, therefore, two modes of the divine presence: the one general, in virtue of which God is present in all His creatures; the other belonging only to the intelligent creature, a far more intimate presence, so intimate that it is expressed by the word " habitation," a presence which renders the happy soul thus favoured the " temple " of its God. Of the first or general mode, we shall say only what is necessary to form a true idea of it.

We must not, indeed, conceive of the divine omnipresence under the form of actual diffusion and infinite expansion of the divine substance as though it were a boundless ocean; this was the idea formed

[1] S. Thomas, *Summ. Theol.*, Ia, q. 43, a. 3.

by S. Augustine in his youth,[2] an idea that is quite wrong. According to S. Thomas, the fundamental reason of the substantial presence of God in His creatures is nothing else than the immediate action which He exercises in all and each of them in order to produce and to preserve their being and to move them in their operations.

God indeed being a pure spirit cannot be present in a place like a body is in place, that is, quantitatively (*per quantitatem dimensivam*), but according to the mode proper to spirits, in so far as they exercise activity, i.e., by virtual contact (*per contactum virtutis*). God can be present everywhere, because since He is immense, possessing infinite power, He is able to exercise activity and therefore to be present, in a limitless space, even in an infinite space if such were possible. "It must not be thought," says the holy Doctor, "that God is everywhere by dividing Himself in space, in such wise that part of His substance is here and part there; but He is wholly present everywhere because, being absolute simplicity, He has no parts. . . . Since He is without extension, He is not obliged by the necessity of His nature to occupy any place, great or small, as if He must of necessity be in any one place, since He existed from all eternity before any place existed. But owing to His Almighty power, He is in contact with all things that are in place as the universal cause of being. And thus, wherever He is, there He is whole and entire, because He is in contact with all things by His power, which is most simple."[3]

This is what S. Thomas terms a presence by way

[2] *Confess*, Bk. VII, Ch. I.
[3] S. Thomas, *Sum. Contra Gent.*, I, III, Ch. LXVIII.

of agent or efficient cause; an intimate presence, profound, universal, in which all creatures participate in the same degree as they participate in His goodness.

On this account God is in us; that is, by His presence, by His power and by His essence. But when we possess sanctifying grace, He is within us in a very special and mysterious way; but the sinner is deprived of this presence.[4] It is this new mode of presence, which we have called habitation, that we must now study.

(2) *Habitation of the Holy Trinity in the just soul.* This divine presence pre-supposes and pre-requires sanctifying grace in the soul, but it is different from the presence of God *by* grace.

"Ignorant men," relates S. Theresa, "told me that God is only present by His grace, and I could not believe it, because I have always felt that He was there Himself. A great theologian, of the Order of the glorious patriarch S. Dominic, proved to me that this was untrue: he told me that God is truly present, and explained the manner in which He communicates Himself to us; and this greatly consoled me."[5]

Verily is He Himself present there; and this is what mystics mean by the expression God is present "in the centre of the soul," "in the depths of the heart," "at the summit of the mind."

If we examine this general statement more closely we shall see: (*a*) that God dwells really in the soul of the just; (*b*) that He dwells there as a guest and friend and as an object known and loved.

[4] S. Augustine, *Confess.*, I, VII, Ch. X, S. Thomas, *S. Theol.*, Ia, q. 8.

[5] S. Theresa, Life written by herself, Ch. XVIII, end.

(*a*) *God dwells truly in the just soul.* "Although," as S. Thomas says, "God is in all things by His presence, His power and His essence, He does not *dwell* everywhere, but only in holy souls by His grace. The reason is this: God is in everything by His action, inasmuch as He unites Himself to creatures in order to give and preserve there being. But it is only the saints who by their acts, that is, by knowledge and love, can attain to God and contain Him in a certain way within themselves. For He who knows and loves possesses within himself the object known and loved."[6]

In another place he writes: "God dwells spiritually, as in a home, with the saints, whose mind is capable of possessing Him by knowledge and love, even though they may not know and love Him at the actual moment. God dwells in them in virtue of the fact that they have by grace, Faith and Charity. Such are baptized infants. On the other hand, a knowledge which is not accompanied by Charity does not suffice to establish the indwelling of God in a soul. As S. John in the passage of his first epistle points out (*John* iv. 16): 'He that abideth in Charity abideth in God and God in him.'"

There are many also who know God, either by a natural knowledge or by an unlivened faith (i.e., without charity), and yet in these the Spirit of God does not dwell.[7] "But together with the gift of sanctifying grace, the just receive at the same time the Holy Spirit, who comes to dwell in them. The Holy Spirit is given and sent."[8] With still greater reason does He dwell in souls which have already

[6] S. Thomas, *Comment* on 2 *Cor.* vi. 16, lect. 3.
[7] S. Thomas, *Comment* in I ad. *Cor.* iii. 16, lect. 3.
[8] *Ib., Summ. Theol.*, Ia, q. 43, a. 3.

developed Charity in its fullness, and have, as it were, taken hold of God by a transport of love. He dwells there even outside those passing moments in which they can recollect themselves and live actually with Him.

This doctrine of S. Thomas is only the echo of that of S. Augustine. "God," says S. Augustine, "is present everywhere and wholly everywhere, but He does not dwell everywhere, but only in those who form His temple and on whom He pours the treasures of His grace and merciful goodness. . . . We must then acknowledge that if God is everywhere by the presence of His divinity, He is not everywhere by the grace of *habitation*. . . . And not only does He not dwell in all, but He does not dwell equally even in all those whom He honours with His presence."[9]

We may then, indeed we ought to, recognize a double presence of God in His rational creatures; an ordinary presence and this special, unique presence, in virtue of which He dwells in the soul as in His own abode, His heaven, and as in a temple consecrated to Him. "A temple," says S. Thomas, "is a place *consecrated to the Lord, in which He takes up His abode.*"[10]

But this new mode of presence evidently does not imply any change in God, for He is immutable. We must turn to the creature, to the just soul itself, in order to find the explanation and justification of the divine indwelling. In effect, this indwelling implies a modification or a new effect produced in the soul, which effect becomes the

[9] S. Augustine, *Lib. de Præsentia Dei*, Ch. XII, n. 36, *Epist.* 187; *Ad Dardanum*, n. 41.
[10] S. Thomas, *Comment* in II ad. *Cor.* vi. 16.

principle of a new relation towards God. This new effect, which introduces between the just soul and God certain relations that are so different from those existing between any other creature and its Creator, is nothing else than *sanctifying grace*. This is the bond or the connecting link between the Holy Trinity and the children of God. "My dearly beloved," writes S. John, "if we love one another, God abideth in us (that is, if we have charity), and we in him" (1 *S. John* iv. 12). Our Lord says: "If anyone love me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him, and will make our abode with him" (*S. John* xiv. 23). This indwelling is the privilege accorded for love of God and one's neighbour—or for charity. But there is no charity without the grace which makes us children of God. "Charity," says S. Thomas, "is a virtue in man only in so far as he becomes deified by participation in grace."[11] Consequently what is done by charity, is done in it and by it through grace.[12] Why does God come to me? "Because you are children," replies S. Paul, "God has sent the Spirit of His Son into your hearts" (*Gal.* iv. 6).

We become children of God by grace, by virtue of which we receive the divine adoption.

Does this indwelling of God in us, the existence of which we have just established, imply nothing more than just the gift of grace and the infused virtues which accompany it?

The Greek Schismatics thought so in order to

[11] S. Thomas, *Quest. unic. De Charitate*, a. 2, ad. 7.
[12] P. Terrien, *La Grace et la Gloire*, Vol. I, pp. 256-258, with some significant extracts from S. Thomas and S. Bonaventure.

escape the arguments by which Catholics demonstrated the procession of the Holy Spirit from the Son as well as from the Father. They said: "Is it not clear from Holy Scripture that the Son sends or gives the Holy Spirit?" But He could not send or give the Holy Spirit unless the latter proceeded from Him. To which they answered that by the Holy Spirit must be understood, not the Holy Spirit Himself, but the gifts and graces He bestows on the soul.

That the Greeks were not alone in this view is shown by the misunderstanding under which S. Theresa herself laboured and to which we referred above. It is therefore necessary to assert firmly and to demonstrate the reality of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit Himself (and indeed of the whole Trinity) in our souls in a state of grace.[13]

Let us first notice the fact that S. Thomas does not hesitate to regard the contrary opinion as an *error*: *error dicentium spiritum sanctum non dari, sed ejus dona*;[14] and he teaches, as a certain theological truth, that by grace, and with grace, we receive at the same time the Holy Spirit, who thus becomes the guest of our soul.[15]

In support of this doctrine, it will suffice to quote several texts of Holy Scripture, so clear and explicit that it seems impossible, without doing violence to the sense of the words, to doubt the reality of the divine habitation in us.

[13] Here, as in most of the Scripture texts which follow, the indwelling of the B. Trinity is *appropriated* to the Holy Spirit. But it is only an appropriation, because the Holy Trinity is none the less wholly in us, as the life of our life and the soul of our soul. Later on we shall have more to say about the work of the Holy Spirit in us.

[14] *Summ. Theol.*, I, q. 43, Ia, obj. Ia.

[15] *Ibid.*, in eo.

First, here are our Lord's own words: "I tell you the truth; it is expedient to you that I go. For if I go not, the Paraclete will not come to you; but if I go, I will *send* him to you" (*S. John* xvi. 7). "If you love me, keep my commandments, and I will ask the Father and he will give you another Paraclete, that he may abide with you for ever. The Spirit of truth whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, nor knoweth him. But you shall know him, because he shall abide with you and shall be in you. I will not leave you orphans, I will come to you" (*S. John* xiv. 15-19). "If anyone love me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and will make our abode in him" (*S. John* xiv. 23).

Thus, according to our Lord, not only is the Holy Spirit sent and given to us with grace and by grace, but the whole Trinity comes to dwell in our soul. The teaching of S. Paul is no less explicit. "Know you not that you are the temples of God and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" (1 *Cor.* iii. 16). "Know you not that your members are the temples of the Holy Ghost, *who is in you*?" (1 *Cor.* vi. 19). "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. . . . But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Jesus Christ from the dead shall quicken also your mortal bodies because of his Spirit which *dwelleth in you*" (*Romans* viii. 9-11). "Because you are sons, God hath sent the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying Abba—Father" (*Gal.* iv. 6). "You have not received the spirit of bondage again in fear, but you have received the spirit of adoption of sons, whereby

we cry, Abba—Father " (*Romans* viii. 15). S. Paul could hardly express more clearly the fact of the substantial presence of the Holy Spirit in the just. We are the temples of the Holy Spirit who is in us, who dwells in us and who has been given us by God. The presence of grace only in our souls would not justify such expressions. It is to God we raise a temple, not to His gifts. Further, a creature does not become the dwelling of God because it is adorned with divine gifts, or because God works in it, but because it is consecrated to be really the dwelling and habitation of the Divinity.

The following is even more explicit. It is S. Paul who speaks. " The charity of God is poured forth in our hearts, by the Holy Ghost who is *given to us* " (*Romans* v. 5). It is impossible to evade or misunderstand the meaning of these words; grace, the created gift, is here clearly distinguished from the Giver; charity is poured forth in our hearts, the Holy Spirit is given to us, both the one and the other are communicated to us. S. Paul also, on several occasions, speaks of the Holy Spirit as being a seal impressed on our souls, as the pledge of heavenly glory, or better still as the earnest of our beatitude. (*Eph.* i. 13-14; 2 *Cor.* i. 21-22.)[16]

Such was the *deep conviction of the early Christians* who loved to call themselves by such words as " Theophore," that is, " one who carries God—or the Holy Spirit," according to the strong expressions of S. Athanasius, S. Cyril of Alexandria, S. Jerome and others.[17] They feared not to pro-

[16] Cf. R. P. Froget, *De l'Habitation du Saint Esprit dans les Ames Justes*, p. 87.

[17] S. Ignatius of Antioch has gathered together all these names in use among the early Christians in a passage in his letter to the Ephesians. " Let us all then be companions in

claim this doctrine openly before their judges and executioners; it was their strength in trial and their consolation under torture.[18]

On many occasions it pleased our Lord Himself to reveal to His privileged ones the mystery of the divine indwelling. Once He called B. Angela "my beloved daughter, *my temple*, my delight." He addressed these words to S. Gertrude several times: "I have chosen thee to *dwell* in thee, and to find in thee My delight." In the prayer for the feast of this saint we read: "O God, who didst prepare for Thyself a delightful dwelling in the heart of Gertrude. . . ." "Behold me in the depth of thy heart," God said to S. Catherine of Siena during an ecstasy. "Thou shalt know that I am thy Creator and thou shalt be happy."

Relying on all these witnesses we may conclude without hesitation "that when God endows a soul with the gifts of sanctifying grace, not only the gifts, but the Divine Persons Themselves enter into this soul and dwell there; for this reason the Holy Spirit is sent invisibly, by the intermediary of His gifts."[19]

(*b*) *God dwells in a just soul as a guest and a friend, as an object of knowledge and of love.* We have already proved that God, in pouring His grace into our souls, comes Himself and dwells there. But by what title does He come? What is the exact manner of His presence in the just soul?

the way of Charity—Theophore, Naophore (one who carries a temple), Christophore, Agisphore (one who carries the Holy Spirit)."

[18] Cf. Terrien, *op. cit.*, p. 225, who gives some remarkable examples taken from D. Ruinard, *Acta Martyr, Sincera*, Verona, 1731.

[19] Suarez, *De Trinit.*, I, XII, Ch. V, No. 8.

This difficult question has been much discussed by theologians. Without stopping to consider these, let us at once explain what S. Thomas teaches on this subject.

The mode of God's habitation in us is at the same time *substantial* and *special*.

Now according to S. Thomas[20] God can be substantially present to a creature in three different ways: first, by way of agent or efficient cause, which is the ordinary way, common to all creatures without exception; secondly, as an object of knowledge and love, which is His special presence with the just on earth and with the saints in heaven; lastly, by means of the hypostatic union by which the Word is united to our human nature in the Person of our Lord. From this simple statement it is clear that the first and third modes do not concern us now. We have therefore to consider the second, the presence of God in us as an object of knowledge and of love. This mode of presence may also be considered in a twofold manner, either as a purely objective or mental and moral presence, or as a real and effective presence. In the first case it is a question of natural knowledge and love. But in a natural way we can only know God in so far as He reveals Himself to us in the more or less inadequate images of His creatures; if we love Him it is as their creator and ours, but this love is always very imperfect. Our mind and our will cannot take in His divine essence as it is. So that there is here no real and true presence.

It is therefore necessary to have recourse to the other kind of presence, viz., to the effective, real, substantial presence, which is an incomparable

[20] *Summa. Theol.*, I, 98, a. 3, and reply to fourth objection.

privilege due solely to the presence of sanctifying grace and charity.

One might perhaps be tempted to think that such a presence is only possible or attainable in heaven. We have but to recall what has been said about the life of the blessed and Christian life: how one is the full florescence, the other the seed.

On earth, the union of the just with God does not differ in its nature from that which the saints enjoy in heaven. "This admirable union called *habitation*," writes Pope Leo XIII, "only differs by state or condition from that which forms the happiness of the blessed in heaven."[21] It differs just as the beginning of a work differs from its completion, as the seed from the mature fruit. Grace which is the seed of glory effects here below, though in an imperfect way, the beginning of the life reserved for us in heaven.

In order to get a clear idea of what the presence of God in us by grace and charity really means, we must study the divine presence such as the saints enjoy in Paradise, for in them this presence is enjoyed in its fullness.

(1) *The divine presence in the souls of the blessed in heaven.*

In heaven the Divine Essence unites itself directly to the happy soul in such a way that God occupies the whole field of its vision without any intermediary, or those images necessary to form our thoughts here on earth.

This union is possible because the soul has been prepared and raised above its natural state of weakness by that supernatural faculty which we call the

[21] Leo XIII, *Encycl. Divinum Illud.*

light of glory.[22] To see God face to face intuitively, two things are necessary: on the side of the created intelligence, the light of glory which raises up and strengthens it by its power; on the side of God, direct and immediate union of the Divine Essence with the created intelligence called to this high contemplation.[23]

We are therefore obliged to acknowledge a *real and true* union between God and the elect in heaven, because God can only be seen and possessed by them by virtue of His actual presence in their souls, and not by any image, and this is a special union altogether different from that by which He is united to other creatures; and also because He is in the Blessed, above all, as an object of intuitive knowledge and beatified love; in short it is a union which, while safeguarding the personality both of God and the creature, puts them into such intimate relations that one of them becomes the beatitude and supreme perfection of the other.[24]

None but those to whom such incomparable joy is granted can know what this vision of God is, and what joy and sweetness and delight it brings. (*Apoc.* ii. 17.) Holy Scripture assures us that it will be the fulfilment of all our desires (*Ps.* cii. 5), a torrent of sweetness capable not only of filling the heart but of flooding it. (*Ps.* xxxv. 9.) This will surely be a knowledge not pale and cold like a ray of winter sunshine, but burning, sweet and wholly delightful, which will produce in the will an immense, irresistible and uninterrupted love, a joy as great as the capacity of the heart.[25]

[22] S. Thomas, *Compend. Theol.*, Ch. CV.
[23] *Ibid.*, *Summ. Theol.*, I, q. 12, a. 2.
[24] Cf. Joret, *La Contemplation Mystique*, p. 18 (Ire. édit.).
[25] Froget, *op. cit.*, p. 147.

This means that since God by His substance is present to the mind of the blessed, He cannot be absent from their will; what takes place in the mind must of necessity (at least in heaven) act also on the will.

Philosophers admit that love naturally follows knowledge, and that union is the appointed end of love.

Let us apply this principle to the life of the blessed.

The saints see God face to face; therefore of necessity they love Him. Why? Because God is the Sovereign Good, who cannot be known without being loved. They find in Him their supreme happiness and they possess Him without fear of losing Him. But enjoyment requires the presence of the loved one. A simple union of affection does not suffice, for this only produces desire. In heaven there is more than this, there is the love of enjoyment which the actual real presence of God effects in the will of the beatified soul; it is the union of God with the soul, since "love is more unitive than knowledge."[26] This union does not of course exclude the bond of affection which is in fact present; the blessed love God and are loved by Him, and love consists formally in a moral bond which brings together and binds together two hearts. But in heaven this goes even further, for love aspires towards a real union which it effects as far as lies in its power, and which once actualized effects complete rest in the possession of the beloved and fills the soul with joy in that every legitimate desire is fulfilled.

This is the end of beatified love; we shall see

[26] S. Thomas, *Summ. Theol.*, Ia, IIae, q. 28, a. 1, ad. 3um.

what we believed, we shall possess what we have hoped for and sought on the way. We shall rejoice at last in the Supreme Good; fully, securely and eternally. The work of our deification will then be finished and complete, and we shall be like unto God, all penetrated and saturated through with His Divinity. (1 *John* iii. 2.)

This end once obtained, our desire for knowledge will be satisfied and our thirst for happiness fully quenched, because the Divine Essence united to our mind will suffice to make known to us all truth; possessing the Source of all Good and of all Goodness, there will be nothing more we can desire.[27]

(2) *The presence of God in the souls of the just on earth.*

Can we rightly apply to the souls of the just on earth, still wayfarers, what belongs to the elect who have already reached the goal? Are we to say that grace produces in them a real and particular presence of God as an object of knowledge and of love? We must remember that there is here question only of the manner of the particular presence produced by sanctifying grace. Therefore, we may set aside the knowledge of God which we have in the natural order which is an abstract and indirect knowledge, and which does not effect that God is really present to the soul; but only present by the concept which represents Him.

We may set aside also the mode of presence produced by faith in one without grace and charity. Faith makes God known to us more fully than reason; it initiates us into the secrets of the divine

[27] Froget, *op. cit.*, pp. 150-151.

life, albeit in a dark and obscure manner. But when separated from charity, as in the case of sinners, it alone does not suffice to make God really present to the mind and cause Him to dwell in the soul. The sinner who has not charity, possesses not God Himself, but only the idea or supernatural concept which represents Him.

The question then is whether grace and charity produce in us a real and special presence of God as an object of knowledge and of love. We reply in the affirmative.

In us, grace is the beginning, the germ, the seed of glory.[28]

We therefore possess in ourselves in germ, in embryo, what will one day form our beatitude. Since, then, this beatitude formally consists in the act whereby the rational creature takes possession of the Sovereign Good, and rejoices in Him—it follows that, even in this life, the just soul attains to the divine substance, and is united to it by knowledge and by love, and begins already to enjoy it. "If the blessed in heaven possess God Himself, the just soul also has, even here, the potentiality for this possession."[29]

All this takes place by means of an experimental and savourous experience, the fruit of the gift of wisdom, and above all by the love of charity.

Let us examine this doctrine, first in its relation to love and then to knowledge.

Presence of God by love. Theologians teach that by means of charity a true and perfect friendship between God and the just soul is established through sanctifying grace.

[28] S. Thomas, *Summ. Theol.*, IIa, IIae, q. 24, a. 3. ad. 2um.
[29] Joret, *op. cit.*, p. 18.

To form a true friendship between two beings, three things are required: (1) a real affection, that is, a love of benevolence, which leads them to wish and seek for in all things the advantage of the person loved rather than their own; (2) that the affection be reciprocal; (3) that this affection should have a foundation in a certain community of goods, such as resemblance of character, similarity of condition, etc., because dissimilar things do not easily unite.[30]

In the charity which unites us to God, it is easy to find the first two characteristics of the love of friendship, benevolence and reciprocity.

He who possesses grace, and therefore charity, which is inseparable from it, loves God for Himself with a sovereign love (benevolence), and is in turn loved (reciprocity), according to the words (*Prov.* viii. 17): "Ego diligentes me diligo." To love God is at the same time fulfilling the divine law and the inclinations of our heart. Besides the commandment to love God, there are also the divine invitations: "My son, give me thy heart" (*Prov.* xxiii. 2); "My delights are to be with the children of men" (*Prov.* viii. 31). It is a fact which we need not stay to explain, that God wills us to love Him, and in return He overwhelms us with His love.

But where shall we find in the love which unites us to God the third element of friendship, community of good, similarity of condition and of life? What is there in common between God, the Creator, and His creatures? God has provided a means of establishing this bond: in order to make us His friends and to raise us up to Himself, He has

[30] S. Thomas, *Summ. Theol.*, IIa, IIae, q. 23, a. 1.

descended to our level; He has lovingly lavished on us His immense treasures in communicating to us His nature (*2 Peter* i. 4), in giving us the title and rank of adopted children (*1 John* iii. 1), with a right to the paternal inheritance (*Rom.* viii. 17).

Charity thus fulfils all the conditions of a true and perfect friendship; therefore it has all the privileges of a friendship and satisfies all its requirements. Now a friendship in order to be perfect, requires not merely any sort of union, but a true and intimate union, the reciprocal joy of two beings who love in a common life. Love being a unitive force, of its essence it tends to union; the more perfect the love, the more perfect the union desired. There is scarcely need to remark that a real and effective union is more perfect than a union which is simply moral and effective.

By virtue of charity then, we enjoy, here below, this real and effective union with God; by virtue of charity we enjoy God substantially present in our soul. Besides all this, every loving soul arrives by instinct at the same conclusion. On the one hand, knowing that charity is essentially a friendship between God and the soul, and on the other, that love tends of itself to complete the union of those who love, she infers that God must be then present as the term of her love. In human friendships a thousand obstacles may arise to hinder the desired union. None of these are of any account to God, to Him who is already present as first cause, in the intimacy of our being. He now becomes present by a new and infinitely superior title. He unites Himself immediately with us in the rôle of friend.[31]

[31] Joret, *op. cit.*, pp. 19-20. There also remains the explanation of the "mechanism" of this Divine Presence.

Compared with the full possession and joy of heaven, this union on earth may perhaps seem feeble, more like estrangement and exile (*2 Cor.* v. 6; *Philip* i. 23), but it is not less true that even in this life God " is truly present to those who love, by the indwelling of His grace." This follows from the principle already established, that the charity of this present life is essentially the same as that of heaven.

On the day of the great revelation of eternity it is true that the clear vision and full possession will take the place of faith and hope, while the flame of charity, on the contrary, will grow and increase in the presence of the Supreme Good, its force will redouble in intensity, but its nature will not change. In heaven, charity will demand a real, perfect, and consummate union of the created will with God. Does it not then seem natural that, even in this life, we should claim equally the true and substantial presence of the Holy Spirit, in order that we may rejoice in Him since He is given for this purpose?

After all that has been said concerning the Christian life, it is unnecessary to insist further on this conclusion. Nor need we be astonished to hear S. Thomas affirm that there is for the saints, even in this life, an imperfect beginning of eternal beatitude. This is fulfilled by the union of the Holy Spirit as guest, friend and most tender spouse with

For if the love of friendship demands a real physical presence, love itself does not effect this. The answer to this difficulty is outside the present study. Cf. *Revue Thomiste*, 1923, articles written by Père Gardeil: " How does the indwelling of God in just souls come to be." Also by the same author: " The Soul and the Mystical Experience," Bk. II, p. 5 *sqq.* Cf. also by Père Garrigou-Lagrange in the *Revue Thomiste*, November and December, 1928, p. 449 *sqq.*, " The indwelling of the Holy Trinity and the mystical experience."

those souls; by His dwelling in them as His living temples, wherein He receives their homage and adoration, and gives Himself to them in order to be already, in a certain measure, the object of their joy: "*Sicut amatum in amante.*"[32]

Presence of God by knowledge. . . . Can we go still further? Is God also present really and substantially in the souls of the just on earth "as an object of knowledge, *sicut cognitum in cognoscente*"? In other words, if the love of charity brings with it the effective presence of the Holy Spirit in those who are in a state of grace, can we say the same effect is produced by the knowledge they have of God?

S. Thomas's reply is in the affirmative. But it is not a question here of any kind of knowledge, even supernatural. The knowledge which has a claim to the Divine Presence is of the experimental kind, acquired only by close union with God and which is the fruit of the gift of wisdom.[33]

One may know the flavour of a fruit theoretically without having tasted it, but it must be tasted and eaten before we can have an experimental knowledge of it. Even so the image of God suffices to know Him in a speculative way. Creation, which is a reflection of Him, manifests Him; but in order to know Him experimentally, to feel and taste His divine sweetness, a real, true substantial presence is absolutely necessary. Now the Divine Persons come to us in order that we may be able to rejoice in Them.[34] In giving Themselves to us, They leave in our souls certain gifts which are the formal

[32] S. Thomas, *Summ. Theol.*, Ia, q. 43, a. 3.
[33] *Ibid.*, sent., dist. 14, q. 2, a. 2, ad. 3um.
[34] S. Thomas, sent., I, dist. XIV, q. 2, a. 2, ad. 2um.

principles of this joy, namely charity and the gift of wisdom. Charity makes us like the Holy Spirit, the uncreated Love; and the gift of wisdom likens us to the Divine Word who knows God with a knowledge analogous to that whereby God knows Himself, for the Divine Word, term of the knowledge of the Father, is a Word by whose operation love is produced.[35]

We know this presence of God in the depths of our heart somewhat in the same manner as the soul knows itself. It is true the soul does not know herself directly or by intuition, for she does not see her own substance; but she infers it by the acts of which she is the source and moving principle. Now if we know the souls of others we reason by the exterior acts (of intellect and will) of which we are witness, but when it is a question of our own soul, not content with regarding exterior manifestations, we examine the data of consciousness which are internal; we are conscious of life within us, of our thoughts and of the acts of our will. Thus we obtain a sort of experimental knowledge, although obscure and indirect, of our own soul. " Our soul," S. Thomas says, " knows itself by its presence."[36]

In the same manner proportionately, we know the presence of God in us, in the depth of our soul. We know theoretically that He dwells in the souls of the just; by the gift of wisdom, we taste as it were His presence.

It is true that without a special revelation none can be absolutely certain whether the Holy Spirit be in him; but we can have certain signs thereof;

[35] *Ibid.*, *Summ. Theol.*, Ia, q. 43, a. 5, ad. 2um.
[36] *Ibid.*, Ia, q. 87, a. 1.

S. Paul writes: "For the Spirit himself giveth testimony to our spirit that we are the sons of God" (*Rom.* viii. 16), not by any outward sign but "by the effect of filial love it produces in us."[37]

The veil of our flesh prevents our seeing the glory of God's presence; but we are conscious of it, especially in those happy moments when He deigns to make its effects felt in our hearts.[38]

S. Bernard, speaking of himself, tells us that he recognized the presence of the Holy Ghost within him "by a movement of the heart," that is to say, by the flight of vices and earthly affections, by interior reproaches addressed to him regarding the most secret faults, by amendment of life and renewal of the inward man.[39] As to S. Thomas, he teaches that short of a particular and gratuitous revelation, we may conjecture by three signs that we have the presence of God in our hearts; first by the witness of conscience, then by an eagerness to listen to and to put into practice the word of God; and lastly, that interior savour of the divine wisdom, which is the pledge and prelude of our future felicity.[40]

God is then really and substantially present as guest, and friend, and spouse, and Sovereign Good, in every soul in a state of grace and charity; He is united to it in a special manner which is the exclusive privilege of the just.

What is the *degree* of this union? What has already been said regarding the limits of our charity on earth, enables us to reply that charity *always*

[37] S. Thomas, *Comment. Epist. ad. Rom.*, VIII, lec. 3.
[38] Cf. S. Theresa, *Interior Castle*, 7th dwelling, Ch. I.
[39] S. Bernard, *Sermon 74, in Cant.*
[40] Cf. S. Thomas, *Opusc.*, XL, *De Humanitate Christi*, Ch. XXIV.

actually present pertains only to the blessed in heaven; in baptized infants who have not yet come to the use of reason, the union with God is purely habitual; in adults in a state of grace it is habitual and actual: habitual during sleep and the thousand occupations which absorb the mind; actual when the soul turns towards God in deliberate thought, applying itself to know and love Him, to walk in His presence, to live in intimacy with Him.

We need not be too much troubled by our inability to be always actually united to God. This inability, which is incidental to our state as wayfarers, prevents us, indeed, from being always consciously engaged in the exercise of knowledge and of love, but we have within us the principle from which they emanate. Our mind and heart may not be at every moment fixed on God, but the force which makes us tend towards Him remains.[41] Consequently the more perfect and intense this principle of union, the more entirely shall we possess God.

Although our union with God can only be full and complete in heaven, yet we ought, even on earth, to desire and to seek for it, and to strive with all our power to render it as perfect as is possible here. First by avoiding obstacles such as wilful and deliberate sin, attachment to creatures, or to the goods and pleasures of this life, chains which hold the soul down and prevent it from soaring up towards the Eternal Good; also dissipation of mind, which draws our thoughts and affections far from God, who should be its centre. When we have accomplished this more or less negative work, it remains for us to draw more closely the bonds

[41] S. Francis of Sales, *Treatise on the Love of God*, I, 7, Ch. III.

which unite us to God: by the study of His perfections and His blessings, and above all by many acts of charity, because we must not forget "it is the privilege of love to unite us immediately to God."[42] That is why S. Paul says: "Above all these things have charity, which is the bond of perfection" (*Col.* iii. 14).

Actual union with God, then, ought to be the object of our most ardent desires, the goal of our efforts, the joy of our exile, and the end to which all our spiritual life is directed: *Mihi autem adhærere Deo bonum est* (*Ps.* lxxii. 28). In this blessed union, indeed, consists the perfection of our way on earth, as it will form one day the perfection and happiness of heaven.[43]

II. Actual Grace

God, who dwells in the just soul, is not inactive therein. The three Divine Persons, dwelling in the soul, first transform its essence by sanctifying grace, then beautify and adorn it with supernatural gifts and endow it with a deiform life, similar to Their own.

Habitual grace is the supernatural vital principle of this life; the infused virtues and gifts of the Holy Spirit are the supernatural faculties. Faculties are intended for action and supernatural faculties to produce supernatural, deiform, and meritorious acts.

[42] S. Thomas, *Summ. Theol.*, IIa, IIae, q. 27, a. 4, ad. 3um.
[43] Cf. Froget, *op. cit.*, Ch. III, IV, and V. Terrien, *Grace and Glory*, T. I, T. IV.

Our spiritual life expands and grows by the repetition of these acts. These faculties need to be set in motion in order to produce acts; it is necessary then that God should provide in our soul a third element, whose special function should be to stir up our supernatural powers and set them in motion. This element or principle of activity we call ACTUAL GRACE.

(1) WHAT IS ACTUAL GRACE?

Before we seek to define it, let us look at its work in our soul.

Our intelligence is in darkness, it cannot see. It needs light to see the truths of Faith which are to guide our path. The light descends on us, it bursts on the obscurity of our tortured mind; it is God who enlightens us. This light which comes like a flash across the darkened vision of the soul, is actual grace.

Enlightened by God, we see what we ought to do, but we hesitate when considering the necessary resolutions to be taken and the efforts required to fulfil them. Suddenly an unknown force seems to flow into the soul, an irresistible power takes hold of our trembling will, possessing it, and arousing it to make firm acts of perseverance. It is God sending His aid to enable us to will and to keep our resolutions. This supernatural act of will, which passes so swiftly through us, is an actual grace.

There are many other such cases: the struggle against our passions, for instance, and resistance to temptation. What can we do of ourselves to discipline and subdue these evil inclinations which arise in the shallows of our corrupt nature? How

long can we carry on this struggle? Who can hope to resist, by his own strength, the temptations which assail and torment him? We need indeed much help to enable us to conquer our passions, to resist the devil and his evil angels, the world and the flesh. This help we receive effectively in actual graces which unite our forces and lead them into action, in the struggle for virtue. Also in the hour of defeat it is grace which renews our spent courage, strengthens us and enables us to set out again on the road to salvation and perfection.

All this is taught us by our own experience; at every moment, so to speak, we receive from God grace, given to our soul, or rather to our faculties, to urge them to *action*. This last point must be kept well in mind: actual grace, which acts directly on our spiritual faculties, the mind and the will, is not given to us to raise these faculties to a supernatural plane: that is already done, or will be done by sanctifying grace; but in order to set them going, in order to produce (or at least dispose them to, as in the case of grace urging to conversion) supernatural acts.

So far we have spoken of actual *interior* graces, but there are others which only indirectly influence our spiritual faculties, by acting directly on our senses and sensible faculties. These are called *exterior* graces, and are most often accompanied by interior graces. The reading of Holy Scripture or of some pious book, a sermon, edifying conversation or example, are all exterior graces. They do not of themselves strengthen our will, but they produce in us good *impressions*, which stir up the mind and the will and incline them towards supernatural good. The *interior motions* do the rest.

This is in accordance with God's way of governing us His creatures; we are raised from the sensible to the spiritual; God adapts Himself to our weakness, and makes use of visible things to lead us to good.

In view of these explanations we can give an easy *definition* of actual grace. It is a supernatural and transitory aid. But this aid must stir up and move our higher faculties. Actual grace, then, is a supernatural and special action of God upon the faculties of the soul, in order to enable it to perform supernatural acts, in accordance with the supreme end to which it is destined.

Actual grace is the transitory action of the Holy Spirit of God on the soul, exercised, either without, to prepare the soul to receive it; or within, to develop the new life there created. Consequently it differs from habitual or sanctifying grace, in that it is a help given by God to the soul, only in view of some particular act, while sanctifying grace is an *habitual disposition of the soul*, created and preserved by the Spirit of God. The act being essentially a transitory thing, actual grace is also something that passes. Habitual grace, on the contrary, like a habit of the soul, is essentially a permanent thing. But they are not, properly speaking, two distinct graces; rather are they two aspects of supernatural grace; the first, actual grace, tends of its very nature to action and to the exercise of the other, for the first is really nothing more than a preparation, or a movement towards habitual grace.

(2) The manner of action of actual grace.

Theologians speak of actual grace under a variety

of terms, such as prevenient grace, sufficient, efficacious——

Are these different graces? Certainly not: grace is one, but its effects on the soul are many and various as their names. They are only so many aspects of the progressive action of the Spirit of Christ in the soul.

The best way to understand clearly this action of God on the soul is to study its different phases.

First of all, actual grace implies essentially the idea of motion; it is a divine impulse which moves the will to produce supernatural acts. The will possesses this aptitude either by reason of some good presented to it *here and now*, or by reason of an end it desires to attain; or in particular by virtue of an interior impulse which, while respecting its liberty, inclines it to decide to seek and to endeavour to attain some good thing. In the former case, the end and the good being exterior to the will, only exercise a moral influence over it. In the latter, on the contrary, the power which inclines the will and causes it to act produces in it a physical or real movement.[44] But the soul on which this divine physical movement is exercised can be either in sanctifying grace or without it. Hence this divine movement is capable of effecting a twofold object.

Deprived of grace, the soul has an aptitude for the supernatural, but does not possess the necessary supernatural virtue. In order to perform a supernatural act, the physical movement of grace is needed; not only to incline the will to act, but to communicate to it the virtue, at least in a transitory

[44] This reasoning is in conformity with the Thomist doctrine of grace.

manner, in order to make the act supernatural. It is the same when God moves a soul to repentance. On the other hand, the soul in a state of grace possesses both aptitude and the virtue. It suffices then that actual grace, by its physical action, directs this aptitude and virtue to produce a supernatural act. This is the case whenever a just soul is divinely moved to exercise itself in virtuous acts.

Let us, in the light of this explanation, examine the various cases possible to the action of grace.

Take first the case of an adult unbeliever: he is not a Christian, but he acts according to his conscience and does what he believes to be right. Theology teaches that God intervenes and helps him to do his duty and to conquer the grave temptations that assail him. In what does this intervention consist? Usually in a movement exercised directly in the soul, the mind, or the heart. This help, not being due, is a free gift, accorded by the sole motive of love; it is a grace, a first actual grace.

The soul which receives this divine benefaction may either accept or reject it. Let us suppose it is accepted: God will then not be slow to raise it to a supernatural level. When certain exterior circumstances occur, the Holy Spirit will move this soul to a first *affectus*, or an affective movement together with a sort of illumination of the intellect, the *illuminatio intellectus*, which will incline it to accept the divine truth. This first actual grace is called in theology *excitant*, because it is a first invitation, as it were, to the supernatural order. It is also called *prevenient* because it precedes the acceptance of our will; and *operating* (but not co-operating), because it is produced by the Holy Spirit alone, without any

intervention on our part. It is an indeliberate act of the soul.[45]

The soul, however, cannot remain in this state. This first grace calls for another; it arouses, draws, and urges to further action. If the will responds to this attraction and acts as directed by the divine movement, the Holy Spirit intervenes again; and not alone this time, but with a certain co-operation of the will. This supernatural act is *co-operating* grace.[46]

This is not all. God by His intervention enters and dwells in the soul, so that it tends of itself to go on to the end. If the human will offers no opposition, it receives yet a new grace, which confers the necessary power to perform the act itself; this is called *sufficient grace*. God, who respects the liberty of His creature, does not by this grace force him of necessity to perform this act. But if the human will obeys the guiding of the Holy Spirit, God continues to move the soul and to lead it to perform freely the supernatural act. This, the last grace, the crowning intervention of the Holy Spirit in the act of the will, is called *efficacious grace*.

Such is the procedure of God's intervention and the graduation of the graces which tend to its full acceptance. But these different kinds of actual grace are not really distinct; they are simply various

[45] One must not confuse *operating* grace with grace purely *excitant*. The latter embraces less than the former. Thus, to speak of at least one difference, grace merely excitant precedes the act of our freewill, whereas operating grace may attain even to the actual fulfilment of our free act. In the text we set it in opposition to *co-operating* grace, without, however, intending to identify it with prevenient grace.

[46] Cf. S. Thomas, *Summ. Theol.*, Ia, IIae, q. 3, a. 2.

aspects of the progressive action which the Holy Spirit desires to establish in the soul. He acts on the soul as often as she yields herself to His influence, and in the proportion in which she yields herself until she accepts His movements finally and definitely.

The case we have just considered is that of a soul deprived of sanctifying grace. The divine action is similar in the case of one possessing it. The Holy Spirit does not intervene to lead the soul to accept and to give itself to God, but to perform a supernatural act; and we find here the same process up to the time when the soul, under the action of actual grace, has freely resolved on the act inspired by the Holy Ghost. . . . For example, the thought comes to me to make an act of the love of God. I have done nothing to suggest this thought, it is prevenient actual grace, an invitation from God, an inspiration of the Holy Ghost. If I accept it willingly and dispose myself to this act of love, I do so by the aid of co-operative grace, and when the act of love is accomplished, through the divine aid the grace has become an efficacious one.

(3) Necessity of actual grace.

If this were a treatise on dogmatic theology, we should here have to speak of the Pelagian heresy and the semi-Pelagians, and to establish the Catholic doctrine firmly against them. We will leave that to those who treat *ex professo* of such matters, and will simply recall the principles which throw light on this ascetic side of the question.

The *general principle* is this: Actual grace is necessary for every supernatural act, since there

must always be a due proportion between the effect and its cause. To put it more clearly:

(*a*) It is of faith that purely supernatural actual grace is absolutely necessary in order to perform the good works which *precede* justification. This truth was defined by the Council of Trent, *Sess.* VI, Ch. I. Consequently, when it is a question of *conversion,* or the change from mortal sin to a state of grace, we have absolute need of supernatural grace to form the preparatory acts of faith, hope, penitence and love, and even for the beginning of faith and for the initial step, the desire to believe.

(*b*) It is the common teaching of theology that actual grace is required to perform the good works which follow justification.

(*c*) The Church has defined that a special actual grace is needed to persevere in grace already received. That is easy to understand.

To persevere means to resist evil or temptation and to do good, that is, to do one's duty. None, however holy, are free from *temptations*; these are sometimes so urgent and persistent that we cannot resist without the help of God. For this reason our Lord recommended His apostles to watch and pray; not merely to watch or to rely on our own insufficient strength, but above all to lean on the power of God, always placed at the disposal of the soul that prays.

It requires energetic and persevering efforts to accomplish all our duties faithfully, and the most superficial knowledge of human nature shows us that the soul cannot make this effort without the aid of grace. As S. Paul teaches: "He who has begun a good work in us will perfect it unto the day of Jesus Christ" (*Phil.* i. 6), and we can say

with S. Peter that it is for the author of our vocation to bring it to a good end (1 *Peter* v. 10).

This doctrine is all the more convincing if we remember that our ideal should be not only to persevere, to remain in a sort of *statu quo*, but *to increase* daily in sanctity and consequently to strive to avoid all deliberate venial faults and to lessen the number of our imperfections. Our own personal experience teaches us that we cannot remain long without committing faults which hinder our spiritual advancement. Further, S. John says quite clearly that they deceive themselves who think they are without sin (1 *John* i. 8); and the Council of Trent condemns those who say that a just man may, by a special privilege of God, avoid venial sin all his life (*Sess.* VI, can. 23). "To misunderstand this doctrine would be to show a very deficient knowledge, both of the nature of grace and also of its general economy. If grace consists in the Holy Spirit creating and preserving a new life in the faithful soul, how can we imagine that this soul can, by its own power, live the life it has received? Clearly the same Spirit who creates and preserves this divine life, also intervenes to set it in motion and develop it."[47]

(*d*) All that we have said about perseverance in good applies also to final perseverance. By final perseverance we understand here that special provision of Divine Providence in ordering all things so that the end of life (in time as considered in opposition to life in eternity) shall find the soul in a state of grace. This is a special gift and a very great grace. "To die in a state of grace," writes

[47] Labauche. *Leçon de Théol. Dogmatiq., l'homme*, p. 150, n. 2.

M. Tanquerey, "in spite of all the temptations which assail us at the last moment, or to escape these struggles by a gentle or sudden death, falling asleep in the Lord, is, according to the Councils,[48] the grace of graces, which cannot too often be asked for; a grace which we cannot merit, but which we can obtain by prayer and by a faithful co-operation with grace, *suppliciter emereri potest*" (S. Augustine, *De Dono perseverantiæ*, 6, 10).[49]

"According to the teaching of the Saints,[50] God, of His infinite mercy, bestows this grace liberally not only to the just at the hour of death, but to sinners who are not hardened in sin. By His light and inspirations, God shows them the greatness of His goodness and the hideousness of sin. He places before them the alternative: 'Wilt thou have Me or not?' If the soul at the last moment rejects God through contempt, it is lost for all eternity. If, on the other hand, it grieves for its life of sin, God pardons it, and permits its reception into heaven after having expiated its faith in Purgatory."[51]

However consoling this hypothesis, yet actual grace is necessary for every act of a supernatural order. This necessary intervention and powerful action on the will arouses in the mind disquieting and agitating questions regarding the relations which exist between efficacious grace and man's free-will. This question is all the more serious as

[48] Cf. 2, Counc. of Orange, can. 10; Counc. of Trent, *Sess.* VI, Ch. XIII.

[49] Tanquerey, *op. cit.*, p. 89.

[50] Cf. *Spirit of S. Francis of Sales*, Part III, Ch. XIII. S. Catherine of Genoa, *Treatise on Purgatory*, Ch. IV. Lacordaire, 72 Conf.

[51] Labauche, *op. cit.*, p. 169.

it concerns our eternal destiny, brought about by efficacious grace and the gift of final perseverance.

We need not concern ourselves here with the controversies raised by theologians: discussion on this point is of little practical use, and does not effect the humility and confidence which a true disciple of Christ should have. Therefore leaving this mystery in the shadow of its own obscurity, we must hold on firmly to two things which should bring rest and satisfaction to the most exacting soul: (1) God abandons no one, and He gives to each sufficient means for his sanctification and salvation; (2) everyone can, and should, strive to co-operate with the grace of God, to render effective that supernatural action which leads to eternal happiness.

We may here draw attention to certain *practical conclusions*:[52]

(*a*) We should have an unlimited and unshaken confidence in God, because as the Psalmist sings (*Ps.* xli. 7-9): "For he is my God and my Saviour; he is my helper, I shall not be moved. In God is my salvation and my glory; he is the God of my help, and my hope is in God. Trust in him, all ye congregation of people, pour out your hearts before him. God is our helper for ever."[53]

(*b*) We must have frequent recourse to prayer in order to obtain the grace of God's mercy; above all, we must ask with faith and perseverance for that crowning grace which we call the grace of a good death.

(*c*) Since "God, who created us without our

[52] Cf. Meynard-Gerest. *op. cit.*, t. I, pp. 228-230.

[53] Cf. *Ps.* XXX., 1; Bossuet, *Medit. on the Gospel*, 2nd pt., 72nd day.

assistance, will not save us without our co-operation," we must yield full correspondence to grace. God Himself calls us: "Behold I stand at the door and knock." "My son, give Me thy heart." "To-day if you will hear His voice harden not your hearts."

Here we have the entire and infallible means for the attainment of holiness and salvation.

CHAPTER II

JESUS CHRIST, THE FOUNDATION OF OUR SPIRITUAL LIFE

I. Jesus Christ the model of our supernatural life: (1) as Son of God; (2) in the activity of His Humanity; (3) in His entire dependence on His Divinity. II. Jesus Christ the cause of our sanctification by His merits and satisfaction: (1) the satisfaction of Christ; (2) the merit of Christ. III. Jesus Christ the efficient cause of our supernatural life: (1) during His life on earth by His Humanity, instrument of His Divinity; (2) since His Ascension; (*a*) by the Sacraments; (*b*) by the spiritual contact of Faith.

We have already seen in a rapid sketch something of the riches of our spiritual life, that mysterious and ineffable participation in the divine life which is conferred by the indwelling of the Blessed Trinity. But all this comes about through the merit and satisfaction of Jesus Christ, who, on this account, enters so essentially into our spiritual life that it is justly called *Christian* life.

Jesus Christ is the foundation of our spiritual life. It is S. Paul's own expression. "You are God's building; according to the grace of God that is given to me, as a wise architect I have laid the foundation: and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. For no other foundation no man can lay, but that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ" (1 *Cor.* iii. 9-11).

Our Lord is, then, the foundation of that supernatural edifice built up by the continual development of the divine life in us. If we remove the foundation, the edifice crumbles, life is extinguished, all the supernatural is destroyed.

Our Saviour's own words show us even better the place He must have in our Christian life. "I am the door of the sheep," He said one day to the Pharisees; "I am the door: by me if any man enter in he shall be saved: and he shall go in and go out; and shall find pastures." (*John* x. 7-9.) And on the night of the Last Supper to Thomas, who said to Him: "Lord, we know not whither Thou goest; and how can we know the way?" Jesus replied: "I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh to the Father but by me." (*John* xiv. 5-6.)

Commenting on the first of these passages, S. Thomas remarks: "As one must pass through the door to enter a house, so every soul who would penetrate the secrets of God must pass through Jesus Christ."[1]

The Humanity of Christ is, then, the necessary and normal way which leads to God. S. Augustine says: "Man needed a visible ideal; this ideal was not fulfilled in any human creature: it was God alone, God invisible, and in order that this ideal might be realized, God became incarnate."[2] This, among many others, is one reason for the Incarnation: sinful and strayed humanity had need, not only of a Redeemer, but also of a guide in whom it could trust, a visible and attainable model.[3] Jesus Christ,

[1] *Comment. on John*, Ch. X, lect. II, n. 2.
[2] *Sermon on the Birth of Our Lord.*
[3] Cf. *Vie Spirituelle*, December, 1921, p. 188; S. Thomas, *Summ. Theol.*, III, q. 1, a. 2.

God made man, became this guide and model, and the desire, without some special grace, to go directly to the Divinity without passing through the Humanity of Jesus Christ, is fraught with dangerous illusions. The case is not an imaginary one. S. Teresa acknowledges that it was her own: "I wish to speak of something that seems to me important . . . how could I have had it in my mind, even for an hour, to think that Thou, Lord, wast an obstacle to holiness? I know myself and see clearly that our homage could never please God except through Jesus Christ, and He wills to bestow on us great graces only by means of this most holy Humanity in which He is well-pleased."[4]

"If, then," writes S. Thomas, "in seeking God you ask which way to go, receive Christ; He is the way, according to the word of Isaias" (xxx. 21). "This is the way, walk in it." S. Augustine also says: "Walk through the Man and thou shalt come to God. It is better to walk haltingly in the right way than boldly along the wrong one. He who limps along the right road, even if he advances but slowly, reaches the goal, while he who is in the wrong one strays farther every step he takes. If, then, thou dost ask by what road to go, hold fast to Christ, for He is the Truth which thou dost desire to reach; if thou seekest where to stop and rest, hold fast to Christ, for He is the Life. Keep fast to Him, then, if thou wouldst be safe, and thou canst not indeed stray, for He is the Way."[5]

"Way, truth, life" are three words of divine origin which show us the place and office of Jesus

[4] Her Life, written by herself, Ch. XXII.
[5] *Comment. on John*, Ch. XIV, sect. 2, n. 3.

Christ in our spiritual life. S. Thomas, and after him all theologians, point out this office, saying that Christ is at once the exemplary, the meritorious and the efficient cause of our holiness. He is the exemplary cause, the unique model and guide to perfection by His teaching and His virtues. He is the Way and the Truth; He is the meritorious cause, the worker in our Redemption, and the infinite treasure of our grace; He is the efficient cause of our sanctity, the source whence the divine life springs forth which we call our spiritual life: He is the Life.

I. Jesus Christ the Model of our Supernatural Life

Since our spiritual life is a participation in the very life of God Himself, we should, in order to live this life, imitate Him as far as possible. "Be ye perfect," our Lord says, not in any manner, but "as your Father in heaven is perfect." But how shall we know the Father in heaven? He dwells in inaccessible light (1 *Tim.* vi. 16), and "no man hath seen God at any time" (1 *John* iv. 12). How, then, can we imitate His perfections? "God,' replies S. Paul, "has revealed Himself by His Son and in His Son Jesus Christ (2 *Cor.* iv. 6). Jesus Christ is the "splendour of the glory of the Father" (*Heb.* i. 3); the image of the invisible God (*Col.* i. 15); He knows His Father (*Matt.* xi. 27) (*John* x. 15) and He knows Him in order to reveal Him to us: Christ is the revelation of the Father (*John* i. 18), and He reveals Him in taking our nature. This recalls what S. Augustine says in the passage quoted above: the Eternal Son became

man in order to show us by His example how we may, even on earth, imitate the divine perfections.

But how, and in what is Christ, the Incarnate Word, our model and example? In a twofold way: in His person and in His works; in His state as Son of God and in His human activity, since He is at once the Son of God and of man, perfect God and perfect man. Son of God and son of man, He has truly lived a deified life, and in His actions has shown forth divine sanctity. The Father proposes Him for our imitation: "This is my beloved Son . . . hear ye Him."

(1) To put it more precisely. Christ is our model *in His state as the Son of God*, in that His divine filiation is the type of our own; His condition as Son of God is a model of that state in which we are first established by sanctifying grace. Christ is the Son of God by name and by right in virtue of the hypostatic union; we are sons by adoption and grace, but really by a true title. Moreover, Christ has in Himself the fullness of sanctifying grace and it overflows upon us; "of his fullness we have all received" (*John* i. 16) more or less abundantly. But it is substantially the same grace, and "our divine filiation," as S. Thomas teaches, "is a similitude or likeness of the Eternal Sonship." Such is the first fundamental characteristic of our resemblance to Christ: the Father will not receive us as His children except in so far as we possess sanctifying grace, which is the fundamental sign of our likeness to Jesus; we shall only be co-heirs with Him if we are His brethren by grace.

(2) Christ is also our model *in His human activity*, by His work; because being man He lived as man, and in what perfection! He practised in an incom-

prehensible degree all the virtues of which our humanity is capable—all those, at least, which are compatible with His divine nature; virtues which flowed as from a spring from the grace which dwelt in and adorned His soul.

(*a*) Jesus, it is true, never had either faith which would have been incompatible with the beatific vision which He always enjoyed, or hope, since His soul through union with the Word was filled with the Divinity; but He possessed divine charity in a supreme degree. The great love with which He is filled is poured out on His Father and on His brethren: on His Father; He seeks only what pleases Him; "I love my Father" (*John* xiv. 31). "It is written of me that I should do thy will, O my God" (*Heb.* x. 7). "I do always those things which please him" (*John* viii. 29). "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me" (*John* iv. 34). It was out of love for His Father that He obeyed even unto death: "That the world may know that I love the Father" (*John* xiv. 31). *His love for His brethren:* He died for them, and He Himself said: "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friend" (*John* xv. 13). Because He loved us He gave Himself for us (*Gal.* ii. 20). But as it is God whom we must love in our neighbour, it is above all for love of His Father that He laid down His life. In loving us, it is the Father whom He loves; He sees us in His Father. "I pray for them . . . because they are thine" (*John* xvii. 9).

(*b*) Christ practised *all the moral virtues. Meekness and humility:* "Learn of me, for I am meek and humble of heart" (*Matt.* xi. 29). *Obedience:* He obeyed Mary and Joseph (*Luke* ii. 51); the

Mosaic law, the established power: "Render unto Cæsar that which is Cæsar's" (*Matt.* xxii. 21; *Mark* xii. 17; *Luke* xx. 25). *Poverty and detachment* from earthly things: He was born in a stable; "The Son of Man hath not where to lay his head" (*Matt.* viii. 20; *Luke* xxi. 58); He dies on the Cross and is buried in the tomb of another. *Patience* in dealing with the Jews and with His disciples; above all during His Passion (*Matt.* xxvi. 63). His *mercy*: He stoops to the Samaritan, the woman taken in adultery; He pardons Mary Magdalen; to the penitent thief He is the Good Shepherd; the father of the prodigal; He is devoured with zeal for the honour of His Father's house. He drives the sellers from the Temple, scourges the hypocrisy of the Pharisees; His prayer was continual. (*Luke* vi. 12.)

(3) Thus in Jesus Christ all the virtues are in full expansion; He practices them in a heroic degree and with the most perfect interior dispositions, and yet the most perfect model is accessible to all and full of attraction.

(*a*) *Accessible to all* because He willed to take upon Himself our miseries and weakness, to submit to the same temptations, to be like us in all things. We have not a high priest who cannot have compassion on our infirmities, but one tempted in all things like as we are, without sin. (*Heb.* iv. 15.)

In His hidden life at Nazareth He is the model of that greater portion of the human race who live in obscurity and the fulfilment of obscure labour, and who have to sanctify themselves in the midst of ordinary duties.

His public life is a model for all those called to the Apostolate. Lastly His suffering life gives us

an example of the most heroic patience amid physical and moral suffering, which He endured not only without complaint but with prayer for His executioners.

Jesus Christ has then given a perfect model; even those who do not admit His divinity acknowledge in Him the most perfect type of virtue which ever existed on earth.

(*b*) He is *a most attractive model.* "If I be lifted up, I will draw all things to myself" (*John* xii. 32).

This prophecy is fulfilled every day, and will be till the end of time. In order to prove it we have only to open the Acts of the Martyrs, to read the lives of the Saints, and to look around us. It is true no one has roused so much hatred: "He is a sign—spoken against by many." His Cross must be a "scandal to the Jews, folly to the Gentiles"; but none but He has ever drawn forth so much love—a love in very deed stronger than death. Seeing what Jesus has done and suffered for us, generous hearts have become smitten with love for the Crucified and, in consequence, for His Cross. In spite of the repugnance of nature, they bear their interior or exterior crosses bravely, either in order to resemble more their Divine Master, or to prove their love by suffering with Him and for Him, or else in order to share more abundantly in the fruits of Redemption and to work together with Him for the sanctification of their brethren. Many of the Saints have sought the Cross more keenly than even the worldly seek pleasure.

(*c*) We should notice that this attraction is all the stronger because Christ joins thereto efficacious grace: all His actions before His death being

meritorious, as we shall see later on, He has merited a like grace for us. When we think of His humility, His poverty, His mortification, and all His other virtues, we are drawn to imitate them, not only by the persuasive power of His example, but even more by the efficacious grace which His virtue merited and which He gives to us for this purpose.[6]

4. Lastly, let us not forget that all Christ's activities emanated from the one Person in Him, the Person of the Word; this activity was always divine in its root and principle, even when immediately the work of His human nature. All things are from the Word, who made all things in union with the Father, in absolute dependence on the Divinity. For this reason the Eternal Father received an infinite glory from the actions of His Incarnate Son and took delight in them.

In that also Christ is our example. We too, by sanctifying grace, participate in His Divine Sonship; by it our activity is raised up and deified in its principle; and our union with God through grace will be all the closer—the more our own personality is effaced, and the more our actions are subject to the divine activity.

Here, too, Christ appeals to us, not merely to renounce sin and imperfections, but to put off our own personality *in so far as it constitutes an obstacle to our perfect union with God.* Such is the case when our own judgement, our own will and our susceptibilities, make us act against the will of our Father in heaven. It is impossible, and therefore certainly not God's will, that we should destroy our personality, but we should lead it to an entire surrender, laying it, as it were, at His feet. We

[6] Tanquerey, *op. cit.*, p. 98.

should ask God to be, by His spirit, as He was for the humanity of Christ, the prime mover of all our thoughts and desires, our words and actions, of all our life. When the soul has reached this total self-renunciation, its life is a reproduction of that of Christ. (*Gal.* ii. 20.) God then directs it, and it is led entirely by the inspiration of grace. This is sanctity—the most perfect imitation of Jesus Christ in His state as Son of God, as well as in His fundamental disposition to be all for His Father in His Person and in His activity.

Is this presumption? No, it is what God wills—it is His eternal design for us: "He has predestinated us to be conformed to the image of his son" (*Rom.* viii. 29).

Consequently the more we are conformed to His Son the more the Father loves us, because we are thus more fully united to Him.

We have only then to look at Christ, our example, to see what we have to do. He Himself said: "I have given you an example, that as I have done to you, so you do also" (*John* xiii. 15); "leaving you an example that you should follow his steps" (1 *Peter* ii. 21).

He is the way, the only way, and he who follows Him does not walk in darkness, but attains to the light of life.

Such is the model which faith reveals to us: a transcendent model and yet accessible. "*Inspice et fac secundum exemplar.*" (*Exod.* xxv. 40.)[7]

[7] Cf. D. Marmion, *Le Christ Vie de l'Âme*, pp. 54, 56.

II. Jesus Christ the Cause of our Sanctification by His Merit and Intercession

Christ, by His satisfaction, merited for us the grace of divine filiation. It is, then, the doctrine of His merits and His satisfaction that we are about to study in its broad outline.

(1) By Adam's sin, he and his descendants lost all right to the divine life and heritage. That was the punishment meted out by God to the human race, and it was impossible for any man to offer adequate reparation for the sin committed. Sin is infinite in its character, therefore the reparation must partake of the infinite. S. Thomas says: "There is no satisfaction fully sufficient except one of infinite value, and that is a work which God alone can accomplish."[8] It is for this very reason that the Son of God became incarnate, suffered and died for us.

In order to understand the meritorious and propitiatory value of the actions and sufferings of Jesus Christ, we must call to mind the axiom of philosophy: "acts belong to the person." When I see with my eyes, or hear with my ears, or think with my mind, I act by my human nature, or rather by the faculties of this nature; but in fact, all the acts of my nature are to be attributed to my person; it is *I*, the same one who sees, hears, and thinks, although each of these actions has its immediate source in a different faculty.

In Jesus Christ the human nature is united to the Person of the Son of God. Many of His actions,

[8] *Summ. Theol.*, Part III, q. 1, a. 2, obj. 2.

such as eating, sleeping, suffering, dying, could only be accomplished in and by His human nature; but all belong to that Divine Person to whom His humanity is united. In Jesus Christ, the Divine Person acts and works by the human nature. Consequently every action accomplished in Christ's humanity, however simple, limited and insignificant it may appear in its physical reality or duration, can be attributed to the Divine Person to whom this humanity is united, and becomes therefore the act of God; or, according to the theological expression, *a theandric act.* It acquires by that very fact an infinite value and an inexhaustible power. This is especially true of those acts which constitute, properly speaking, the mission of Christ on earth, or which belong to them.

This mission is one of substitution: Jesus Christ, as the spotless victim, puts Himself in our place to pay our debts, and to bestow on us by His expiation and satisfaction, a divine life. "God," says Isaias, "hath laid on him the iniquity of us all" (*Isaias* liii. 6). S. Paul also says: "God, sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and of sin, hath condemned sin in the flesh" (*Romans* viii. 3), and "Him who knew no sin, he hath made sin for us" (*2 Cor.* v. 21).

Jesus Christ, on His part, has accepted this substitution; He has willed to take on Himself all our sins to the point of becoming on the Cross in some sense Sin—universal—living Sin. Having voluntarily taken our place, He, for this reason, receives the punishment which was our due, namely death, "which he hath purchased with his blood" (*Acts* xx. 28).

In very truth one single drop of this Blood—or

less—would have sufficed to pay our debt, but love, the love of Jesus Christ for His Father and for us, has led Him to extreme limits. The Father has demanded and the Son has offered in expiation for our sins, all the sufferings of the Passion and death on Calvary, so much so indeed, that the satisfaction was only complete when, from the Cross, Jesus cried: "*Consummatum est.*"

Then only was His personal mission of redemption and the work of salvation accomplished.

(2) So much for expiation. But our Lord has also by His satisfaction and by all the acts of His life, merited for us the graces of pardon, salvation, and sanctification.

Merit is a right to a reward. If the works of Christ merit for us, then Christ has gained for us a right to eternal life and all the graces which belong and which lead to it. That means that the Passion of our Lord is the source whence eternal life flows for us, and therefore that Christ is the meritorious cause of our sanctification.

But how shall we understand this causality since all merit is a personal thing? Let us not forget that Christ is the "first-born of every creature." He was predestined to be the head of His elect. For this reason the grace which is in Him possesses not only a personal character, for it has the privilege of universality, which makes Him in the domain of eternal life the head of humanity; it is the grace of the head, or the *gratia capitis*.

And since merit, the fruit of grace, has, so to speak, the same range as the grace on which it is founded, Jesus Christ, in His quality as head, has merited for us all, just as by substituting Himself for us, He has satisfied for us. "The grace of

Christ," S. Thomas says, " does not rest on Him alone, but is given to Him as Head of the Church, and by this fact it overflows from Him to His members. . . . Also Christ, by His Passion, merited salvation, not only for Himself but for His members,[9] because the head and the members form one mystical body; and for this reason, the satisfaction of Christ (and therefore His merits also) belong and extend to all the faithful as to His members."[10] And as, in this case, He who merits is God, the merits have an infinite value and an inexhaustible power.

If we go into details we shall see with S. Paul that the death of Jesus Christ " ransoms us " (1 *Cor.* vi. 20), " reconciles us to God " (*Ephes.* ii. 11-18; *Col.* i. 14), " justifies us " (*Romans* iii. 24-27), " brings us holiness and a new life in Christ " (*Tit.* ii. 14). Christ is the second Adam. The first brought sin upon us; the second restores to us justice, grace, and life (1 *Cor.* xv. 22). He causes us to pass from death to life (1 *John* iii. 14). His redemption is abundant—and if by the fault of one man death reigns, with much greater reason will those who receive abundant grace reign in life, through Christ alone; for when sin has abounded, grace has abounded still more (*Romans* v. 15-21). That is why " there is now no condemnation to them that are in Jesus Christ " (*Romans* viii. 1).

It is quite clear from these texts that all of which comes to us from God in our supernatural life is given us through the merits of the life, passion, and death of Christ; all graces of pardon and justifica-

[9] *Summ. Theol.*, III, q. 48, a. 1.

[10] *Summ. Theol.*, Part III, q. 48, a. 2 to 1um. Cf. *Christ as Head*, J. Rolland, in supplement to *La Vie Spirituelle*, March, 1929, pp. 281-306; April, pp. 48-69.

tion, of perseverance and salvation flow on our souls from the Cross. " In whom we have redemption through His blood, the remission of sins " (*Col.* i. 14). Therefore we have no right to falter in our faith and confidence in Christ Jesus; He has paid all, and expiated and merited all, and His merits are ours. We possess His riches, and if we have the desire, nothing is wanting for our sanctification (1 *Cor.* i. 5).

It is true that Christ does not merit now, for all merit ceases at the moment of death, but His acquired merits remain with us and His propitiation continues. " This High Priest," cries S. Paul, " for that He continueth for ever, hath an eternal Priesthood, whereby He is able to save for ever them that come to God by Him " (*Heb.* vii. 24-25). And the Apostle shows Him to us in heaven, now interceding for us in His quality of High Priest; " where the forerunner of Jesus is entered for us " (*Heb.* vi. 20); He sits at the right hand of the Father " to plead for us " (*Heb.* x. 24); " ever living to make intercession for us " (*Heb.* vii. 25).

Shall we not then conclude that our confidence in Him should be without limit? " God having delivered his Son to death for us will he not with Him give us all things? " (*Romans* viii. 32). Without Him we can do nothing (*John* xx. 5); we cannot think one good thought of ourselves (2 *Cor.* iii. 5). But in Christ, and with Him, we can do all things. What gives us the victory in our struggle with sin? The grace of God merited and given to us by our Lord Jesus Christ (*Romans* vii. 25). Whence comes all that is good in us, all that in our works merits eternal life? Always from God, through Christ. (2 *Cor.* iii. 5.) It is God, who, because it is His

good pleasure, gives us grace not only to do but to will supernaturally, as He wills. (*Phil.* ii. 13.) So much so, indeed, that though of ourselves we are powerless to do anything in the supernatural order, yet we can do all things through Him who strengthens us; that is to say through Christ Jesus and by the grace He has merited for us. Let us therefore approach with confidence to the throne of grace and we shall obtain mercy.

If we then sum up all that we owe to our Divine Saviour, we may say that in Him and through Him we are ransomed from sin and made children of God and citizens of heaven; that in Him and through Him the whole Trinity dwells in us. He is the universal, living, and inexhaustible source of the divine and supernatural, because in Him and through Him, and by the virtue of His merits and death, God has given us grace, which is a participation of the divine nature.

These are doubtless very consoling and comforting truths, but they are also awe-inspiring. We must receive with a docile heart all the treasures which God gives us through His Son, and labour for their increase; to reject them or let them remain sterile would be to render useless our Lord's sacrifice and works for us, and would expose us to the rigours of the divine justice.

"At the last day," writes Dom Marmion, "when we appear before God, we shall not be able to say: 'My God, I have had so many difficulties to overcome, victory was impossible; my numerous faults discouraged me.' Because God would reply: 'That would be true if you had been alone; but I have given you my Son. He has paid your debt, expiated your sin, and His sacrifice and satisfactions have made atonement for the sins of the whole world. He has

merited everything for you by His death; he has merited your redemption, your justification, your wisdom and sanctity; you must lean on Him; in my divine mind He is the cause not only of your redemption but of all your strength: for all His merits, riches, and satisfactions, which are infinite, are yours from baptism, and as He now sits at my right hand, He offers to me unceasingly for you the fruits of His sacrifice; it is on Him you ought to have leaned, because in Him I have given you strength to overcome all evil as he desired me (*John* xvii. 15), and to be filled with all blessings because it is for you and not for Himself that he is ever pleading.' "[11]

Therefore we must acknowledge the infinite value of the gift of God, and have such a practical faith in the immense merits of Jesus as will fill us with invincible confidence in prayer, and abandonment in all the needs of our soul.

III. Jesus Christ the Efficient Cause of our Supernatural Life

By His life and works, by His Passion and death, our Lord made satisfaction for us and merited salvation for us and the graces necessary to attain it. His part in the work of our sanctification does not stop there; Jesus, the exemplary and the meritorious cause of our spiritual life, is also its efficient cause; not only has He merited grace, but it is He Himself who gives it.

During *His life on earth*, the humanity of Christ was, as the instrument of the Word, the source of grace and life; *since His Ascension*, Christ completes

[11] *Christ, the Life of the Soul*, pp. 81-82.

this office; He gives us graces by the sacraments which produce it of themselves—*ex opere operato*—but by virtue of the merits of Jesus Christ.

(1) *During our Lord's life on earth.* The Sacred Humanity of Christ became the instrument of His divinity to bestow grace and life to those around Him.

(*a*) *Corporal life.* The touch of His Sacred Humanity wrought miracles: healed the sick, raised the dead. We see it all through the Gospels: Jesus stretches out His hand towards the lepers and they are healed; He touches the blind and they see; He puts His fingers in the ears of the deaf mute, and he hears and speaks; a woman touches the hem of His garment and she is healed; He takes the daughter of Jairus by the hand and the child rises up; at His voice the son of the widow of Nain, and Lazarus, rise up alive from the coffin or the tomb. It was so all through His public life, the virtue which went forth from Jesus triumphed over disease and death.

In all this the Sacred Humanity served as the instrument of the divinity. It was the Word, the Divine Person, who healed and raised up from death. But to work these miracles the Word made use of that human nature to which it was united. Health and life came from the divinity, but it was through the words and the touch of His humanity.

(*b*) It is the same with souls in the realm of grace. It is God the Word who remits sin, but through words, actions, and gestures of the humanity which He assumed. Jesus said to Mary Magdalen: "Thy sins are forgiven thee, thy faith hath saved thee, go in peace"; to the woman taken in adultery: "Go in peace and sin no more"; to the paralytic: "Thy

sins are forgiven thee." It is clear that the pardon and justification flow from the divinity; but by means of the humanity. "Christ thus works miracles, remits sin, and gives grace with a sovereign power and liberty, because, being God, He is the source of all grace and all life; but in order to do so He makes use of His humanity, which is life-giving on account of its union with the Divine Word."[12]

This is fulfilled also in the Passion and death of our Lord. He suffers, expiates, and dies in His human nature as the instrument of the Word, and these sufferings of His holy humanity, *working out* our salvation, are the *cause* of our redemption and our renewed life. "You were dead in your sin," says S. Paul, "but God hath quickened you together with him, forgiving you all offences" (*Col.* ii. 13).[13]

It is just because He obtained the salvation of the human race by His merits and sufferings that Christ is appointed to dispense that grace to the whole world. "The effusion of grace in us," says S. Thomas, "belongs to Christ; and this causality of sanctification is the result of the close union which exists between the divinity and the humanity in Christ."[14] The soul of Christ has received the fullest possible degree of grace; by reason of this plenitude which He has received, Christ shares it with souls, and in this way fulfils His office as Head of the Church. For the grace which adorns the soul of Christ is, in its essence, the same as that which purifies us.[15]

[12] Dom Marmion, *op. cit.*, p. 89.

[13] Cf. S. Thomas, *Summ. Theol.*, IIIa, q. 8, a. 1, 1st obj., q. 62, a. 5; 1st obj., q. 48, a. 6; q. 49; a. 1.

[14] Cf. S. Thomas, *Summ. Theol.*, IIIa, q. 8, a. 6.

[15] S. Thomas, *Summ. Theol.*, III, q. 8, a. 5.

(2) *Since the Ascension of Jesus.* Our Saviour no longer dwells among us; we no longer see Him or touch Him; no physical contact is any longer possible between Him and us. How, then, is this power of grace and life to be kept up? How is He at this present time the efficient cause of our sanctity, and how does He produce grace in us?

Let us first notice that God, and consequently Christ as God, can shed abroad grace in souls directly, without any intermediary. He is not dependent on anyone with regard to His gifts or the means He uses to give them.

Nevertheless in the actual order of regenerated human life there exists a normal official way by which the grace of Christ comes to us: above all by the sacraments which He Himself instituted. Therefore we should always have recourse first to these authentic means: they are the pure and inexhaustible sources where we shall infallibly find the divine life with which Jesus Christ is filled and which He desires to share with us; all the other practices which we can invent and use to support and increase this life in us are only useful in so far as they help us to profit more by the sacraments.

(*a*) *The power of sanctification of the Sacred Humanity of Jesus Christ in and through the Sacraments.* A sacrament, says the Council of Trent, is a sensible sign which signifies and produces an invisible grace: it is a symbol which contains and confers divine grace.

We see here an example of the divine condescension in our regard. We are raised up from the sensible to the spiritual: we have in the sacraments a sensible, tangible, exterior sign. As we are made up of matter and of spirit, Christ has willed

to us the matter to signify the grace which He produces in our souls; He communicates His grace by visible means.

It is, however, a fact that the sacraments do not merely symbolize grace; they contain and confer it. In virtue of Christ's institution these rites or signs really produce grace; their effect is grace working in the intimate depths of the soul. This grace and this life they produce of themselves, *ex opere operato*, as the theologians say. It is the sacramental act itself, accomplished in the appointed way and with the right intention, which confers grace, whatever may be the worth or unworthiness of the minister. The real value of the sacrament does not depend on the dignity or sanctity of the officiating priest; it is derived from the institution of Christ, and this is what gives to the Christian soul a firm, almost infinite assurance of divine aid.

We must not conclude, however, that this dispenses the receiver from a true preparation. It is with the soul as with the ground which receives the seed: the harvest is in proportion to the quality of the soil (parable of the Sower); and it is the same with spiritual profit, because the soul can place in the way of the sacrament invincible obstacles which hinder its divine action, and it can also aid the development of the graces received.

With regard to the sacraments, then, there is needed:

(i) A general disposition for the reception of grace: all obstacles to the sacramental action must be removed. Put a barrage across the stream which flows in the plain and the waters are kept back; destroy this barrage and once more the fertilizing water spreads itself over the plain. It is the same

with the sacraments: they are the channels which supply us in abundance with the water of grace; in them is all the help we need. The soul, however, can always resist and put obstacles in the way of their action, and these obstacles vary according to the sacraments.

It is certain, first of all, that we gain no grace from a sacrament without our own consent; lack of integrity and of contrition form an obstacle to the sacrament of penance; mortal sin prevents our receiving grace from the Holy Eucharist. The first preparation, therefore, for the sacraments is the destruction of obstacles, and these once removed, grace flows into the soul when the sacrament is conferred.

(ii) So much is essential and so much suffices to ensure the production of grace. But if this grace of the sacraments is essentially the same for all, it varies almost infinitely in degree and intensity. How great, for example, is the effect of Communion in a saint and its effect in an ordinary Christian. Whence comes this difference? In the variety of the dispositions of those who receive the sacraments, all obstacles having been removed. The greater the capacity of the soul, the greater the grace produced. Now it is by faith, confidence, and love that we develop this capacity of our souls, and their aptitude for receiving divine grace. It is not that this grace is measured according to its essence, its entity—because grace is either received or not, there are not two graces essentially distinct—but it is measured according to the disposition of the soul in its fecundity and its extent of action.

" Let us, then," Dom Marmion says, " open wide the avenues of our soul, bring all the purity and

charity we can, that Christ may pour out on us abundantly His divine life."[16]

Christ, the Word Incarnate, is then, as God, the first principal and efficient cause of the grace produced by the sacraments because He is their author and their source. The sacraments act only as instruments; they are the real and efficient *cause* of grace, but only as instruments, and that in virtue of the power they receive from the humanity of Christ united to the Word and filled with divine life.[17] Whatever the minister of the sacrament may be, he acts only in the name of Christ and in His power; it is the merits of Christ which are applied to us in the sacraments, His satisfaction in which we participate, and His life which flows in our souls through these mysterious channels.

Thus, in truth, all power of the sacraments to give us divine life comes from Christ, who by His life, sufferings, and His sacrifice on the Cross, has merited all grace for us and has instituted these divine means of bringing it to us.

We need to have a *living* and *practical* faith in these means of sanctification; we must first appreciate their value, their richness and fecundity, and then have recourse to them, using them—not sparingly as do many tepid Christians—but frequently; above all the Eucharist, which contains the Author of all grace, bringing with us such dispositions as may make each Communion an ever-renewed point of departure in our ever-increasing efforts towards perfection.

[16] Dom Marmion, *op. cit.*, pp. 91-102.

[17] Theology recognizes a threefold efficient cause in the sacramental grace. God, as the principal cause, then Christ the Word; the conjoint instrumental cause, Christ as man; and the separated instrumental cause, the sacrament.

(*b*) *The power of sanctification of our Lord's humanity apart from the sacraments, by the spiritual contact of faith.* Christ works in us without stint or limit by the sacraments. But this is not His only way; He does so also by virtue of our contact with Him by faith.

" The humanity of Jesus," says S. Thomas, " is the instrumental cause of justification, and this is applied to us spiritually by faith and corporally by the sacraments, because the humanity of Christ consists of body and soul."[18]

We have seen that during His mortal life the physical touch of Christ had power to heal bodily infirmities and to sanctify souls: a few words purified S. Mary Magdalen; and converted the Samaritan woman; a look, during the Passion, moved the soul of Peter to repentance.

This contact—no longer physical, but spiritual—can again be established between our Lord and us by faith. As of old, every time, apart from the sacraments, that we draw near to Christ, a power or a divine virtue comes forth from Him and enters into our souls to enlighten and transform them.

" Blessed," said Jesus Himself, " are those who have not seen yet have believed " (*John* xx. 29). Let us have faith in these words and be assured that the power and virtue of the Sacred Humanity are the same for us as for His contemporaries: Christ lives always. " Jesus Christ yesterday, and to-day, and the same for ever " (*Heb.* xiii. 8).

It is, then, of sovereign importance to keep in contact with our Lord by means of faith in His divinity, in His omnipotence, in the infinite value of His satisfactions and in the inexhaustible efficacy

[18] S. Thomas, q. 27, *De Verit*, a. 4.

of His merits. "How," asks S. Augustine, "can we touch Christ now that He is ascended into heaven?" He replies: "By faith." He who believes in Him touches Him. Would you obtain fruit from this touch? Believe in that divinity, which, as the Word, He shared from all eternity with the Father.[19]

Belief in the divinity of Jesus Christ, then, is the means whereby we come into contact with Christ, source of all grace and life.

In reading the Gospel we retrace in spirit the words and acts of our Lord. When in our prayer we contemplate His virtues; above all when we join with the Church in the celebration of the divine mysteries; when we unite all our actions with His—when we do all these things with faith and love, with humility and confidence—then a divine power, force, or virtue comes from Christ to enlighten us, to aid us to avoid all obstacles to His operation in us and to produce grace in our souls.

"Christ Jesus, who lives always, and whose humanity is indissolubly united to the Divine Word, becomes thus for us (in accordance with the measure of our faith and strength of our desire to imitate Him) a light and a source of life; little by little, provided we persevere in contemplating Him in this wise, He will impress His likeness upon us in revealing Himself to us in a more intimate way, making us partners in the aspirations of His divine heart and giving us the strength to conform our lives in accordance with those aspirations."[20]

Thus the union is established between Christ the vine and the souls which are the branches, and thus

[19] S. Augustine, *Serm.*, CCXLIII, c. 2.
[20] Marmion, *op. cit.*, pp. 106-109.

the sap of grace rises through the vine to the branches. First of all by the sacraments, and especially the Holy Eucharist, which is above all the sacrament of union; then by faith by which Christ dwells in our hearts (*Ephes.* iii. 17), by faith enlivened by love, that is the perfect faith which accompanies the state of grace; every time we come into touch with our Lord by this faith, He exercises in us His sanctifying power. Thus, to use the expression of the Council of Trent, " He diffuses in us His sanctifying virtue, as the head to its members, and as the vine to its branches; because salutary power never fails to precede, to accompany, and to follow our good works."[21]

[21] Counc. of Trent, *Sess.* VI, c. 16.

CHAPTER III

RÔLE OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY IN OUR SPIRITUAL LIFE: HER MOTHERHOOD OF GRACE.[1]

I. Exemplary causality of Mary: (*a*) model of all the virtues; (*b*) a model easy to imitate. II. Mary as meritorious and propitiatory cause: her co-operation in the acquisition of grace: (*a*) her merits; the meaning of merit; Mary has merited for us; extension of these merits; (*b*) Mary as the propitiatory cause. III. Mary's power of intercession; as the universal mediator in the distribution of grace; (*a*) the thesis; (*b*) theological proof: (1) authority of Doctors and Fathers of the Church; (2) authority of the Popes; (3) witness of the Liturgy; (4) theological reasons. Conclusion.

I. Exemplary Causality of Mary

JESUS is the foundation of our spiritual life: all comes from Him and through Him; all is accomplished by Him, in Him, and without Him we can do nothing. His Sacred Humanity is the way, the channel of all the graces acquired by His merits, sufferings, and death.

[1] In placing here our study of the rôle of the B.V. Mary in our sanctification we do not, of course, intend to give it any pre-eminence over that of the Holy Spirit. But as, by the decree of God, the B. Virgin is always associated with her Son in all things, and her actions depend on His actions, from which alone they get their *raison d'être*, it seemed better not to separate the study of her influence apart from that of her Son. This chapter is intended really as an appendix to the preceding one.

RÔLE OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

When we speak of the rôle of the Blessed Virgin Mary in our spiritual life, it is clear that her part depends on that of Jesus and is in close union with it. For the office of Mary depends entirely on the doctrine of her divine maternity, which has as its corollary her dignity and her office as mother of mankind. We can only speak of the spiritual maternity of Mary because faith teaches us her divine maternity. She is the mother of men because she is the mother of God.

It is, then, an error to suppose that the Blessed Virgin became our mother on Calvary, when Jesus, dying, pointed her out to S. John, saying to the apostle: "Behold thy mother." This scene on Calvary merely confirmed an existing reality; Jesus, in speaking thus, simply *declared* that all the regenerated were spiritual children of Mary. Her spiritual maternity is contemporaneous with her divine maternity. It was at the moment of the Incarnation that Mary became the mother of Jesus, the mother of the Son of God, and the mother of God.

It is from this point of view we should take our stand, and we shall see at a glance all the aspects of Mary's co-operation. This point commands a view of the whole order of the acquisition of grace, of the whole series of redemptive acts and their consequences.[2]

In pronouncing freely the *fiat* of the Incarnation, Mary indeed became the mother of Jesus, not only as a private individual but as a Saviour and Redeemer. "The angel did not speak merely of the personal greatness of Jesus; He proposes to

[2] De la Broise-Bainvel, *Marie, Mère de Grâce*, p. 15.

Mary to become the mother of the Saviour, the looked-for Messias — the Eternal King of the regenerated human race. All the work of our Redemption hung on the *fiat* of *Mary*, and of that she was perfectly conscious. She knew what God asked of her and she consented without restriction or condition; her *fiat* included all the fullness of the divine plan; it extended over all the work of redemption."[3]

It must not be forgotten in speaking of Mary's rôle in our spiritual life that the merits and satisfaction of her mediation draw all their value from those of our Divine Redeemer, and are an application of them, which, far from prejudicing the perfect mediation of our Lord, rather exalts and glorifies it. S. Grignon de Montfort complained that this truth was forgotten even in his day. "I turn a moment to Thee, O my Jesus," he cries, "to complain lovingly to Thy Majesty that for the most part Christians, even the most instructed, fail to realize the tie which of necessity exists between Thee and Thy holy mother."[4]

It is in the light of this remark that we must regard the office of Mary as our mother, and mother of our souls and our supernatural life.

"If," writes P. Hugon, "we would exactly express the relation existing between our Lord and His mother, one may say that the mother of grace is everywhere the secondary cause where Christ is the principal one. We love, above all, to contemplate Jesus as our spotless ideal; Mary is, after Him, the model of our predestination. Jesus is the meri-

[3] *Ibid.*, pp. 73-75.
[4] *Traité de la Vraie Dévotion à la très Sainte Vierge*, Part I, art. 2.

torious cause which obtains grace by right of justice: Mary is the meritorious cause by fitness and right of friendship. Jesus has offered a satisfaction equal to or even greater than all the crimes of humanity; Mary, without paying an adequate ransom, has in her way expiated for our faults. Jesus in glory remains our official intercessor; His wounds, which He still retains, plead for us; all heavenly gifts come through Him; the prayer of the Church is made in His name; Mary is, after Him, the all-powerful means by which our prayer ascends and by which every grace descends."[5]

To understand, therefore, the universal action of Mary on the order of grace we must study as we have already done regarding the Sacred Humanity of Christ: (1) her causality by way of example; (2) her causality by way of merit and satisfaction; (3) her efficient causality, or better still, her powerful intercession, which caused her generously to accept all her sufferings: the trials of a long life, the immolation of her Son on Calvary, and the separation from the beloved Son from the Ascension till her death. We may admire in Mary the type of our eternal predestination. " She is," says S. Augustine, " the matrix of God, and consequently the type of all the brethren of Jesus. To have a right to glory one must become Christ, and to become Christ it is necessary to pass through the virginal matrix which is Mary. God has also formed us on this model and has predestinated us in order to reproduce in us the radiant and blessed image of our Mother."[6]

This perfect model is at the same time *full of*

[5] Hugon, *La Mère de Grâce*, Part II, Ch. I, pp. 211-212.
[6] Quoted by Hugon, *op. cit.*, p. 24.

attraction. Mary is of our own race, a simple creature like ourselves. She is as a sister, a mother, whom we feel invincibly drawn to imitate if only to show her our gratitude, our veneration and our love. And she is a model *easy of imitation.* There was nothing extraordinary in Mary's exterior life; she sanctified herself in the ordinary way in fulfilling the duties of childhood, of maidenhood, of a spouse and mother; in the humble household work, in joy and in sorrow, living always in the shadow of Jesus, taking her part in His triumphs and in His deepest humiliations.

Imitation of Mary is, then, a sure road, which leads to that other way which all the predestined must follow, the imitation of Jesus Christ; it is the best way of imitating Jesus, since the resemblance between Jesus and Mary is so perfect, so intimate that one may be called, without exaggeration, the mirror of the other.

II. Mary the Cause of our Spiritual Life by way of Merit and Satisfaction, or her Co-operation in the Acquisition of Grace

Jesus is, in the strict sense, the principal meritorious cause of all the graces we receive. S. Paul says: "As there is only one God, so there is only one mediator between God and us, and this mediator is Jesus Christ, who has given himself as a ransom for us" (1 *Tim.* ii. 5, 6). He is our only Saviour: "we have been reconciled to God by his death" (*Rom.* v. 10), and "of his fullness we have all received" (*John* i. 16), "therefore as by the offence of one, unto all men to condemnation; so also by

the justice of one unto all men to justification of life" (*Rom.* v. 18). The Word alone saved us, and He alone can save us. It would have been allowable certainly for our Lord to have carried out the work of our Redemption alone, to have left His mother in the shade, and to have fulfilled His mission without any aid from her. But God did not so will. It was His good pleasure that the Virgin Mother should be associated in all things with her Son; by a decree which was not of necessity, but which became His wisdom, He decided that Mary should share in all the work of Jesus; that she should co-operate with Him both in the acquisition and distribution of grace.

This co-operation is necessarily of a subordinate order, since the substance of the work belongs to Christ alone, but in this inferior order it is as extensive as is possible to a mere creature.

Let us then see, first, Mary's co-operation in the acquisition of grace; that is to say her causality by way of merit and satisfaction.

(*a*) *Causality by way of merit.*

In order to understand this causality in Mary it is necessary to know what *merit* is.

In every good work there is a threefold value: it is meritorious, it makes satisfaction, and it impetrates. Merit gives a right to an eternal recompense, and even here to an increase of grace.

The end of satisfaction is to repair the outrage done to the Divine Majesty by sin, and if it also renders us agreeable to our offended God, it becomes propitiation. Satisfaction may be transferred to others, but not merit. Impetration is the

power given to the just to obtain by prayer the grace necessary for salvation. It even goes further in its efficacy than merit; because though we cannot merit final perseverance, we can obtain it by prayer: given the necessary conditions it is promised to all who pray in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

As for merit, it is strictly speaking divided into "merit of *desert*" (*de condigno*) and "merit of *fitness*" (*de congruo*). There is a perfect merit, worthy of reward (*de condigno*), when the reward is proportionate to the work, and hence is not more than what justice prescribes that it should receive. The merit of fitness, on the contrary, is based on the right of friendship; it is a recompense which is inspired by generosity rather than by strict obligation.

In Jesus Christ, merit of desert demands proportionate recompense by strict right of justice, because it proceeds wholly from the Saviour. In us, there can be no question of strict justice, nor of proportionate recompense, because it springs from grace, which is already a divine gift. But given the promise or covenant of God and the value of the work performed in a state of grace, there is in us a real proportion between merit and glory.

For this reason eternal life is called a recompense (*Matt.* v. 12); the wage of a day's work (*Matt.* xx. 2); a crown of justice (2 *Tim.* iv. 8); a reward of good works (*Rom.* ii. 6, 7); the payment of a work where divine justice does not forget (*Heb.* vi. 19).

It is of faith that the just can, by good works done by grace and through the merits of Jesus Christ, truly merit an increase of grace, eternal life

and its possession if they die in a state of grace, and finally an increase of glory. (*Con. Trid. sess.* VI, c. 32.)

But can we merit for others by "merit of desert"—that is by true merit? "Our sphere of merit," says V. Hugon, "only extends so far as the divine touch is given to make satisfaction for ourselves: merit is exhausted on our own needs. Only the Head of the human race can merit for others. This rôle belongs only to Jesus Christ, Principle of all salvation; He becomes our justice in transferring His merits to us, even as He becomes our life in bestowing on us His grace."[7]

The most Blessed Virgin is not the Head of the human race, nor the primal cause of our supernatural life, having herself received grace through the anticipated merits of her Son. Therefore she could not merit salvation for us by strict right of justice, or *de condigno*, but by the merit of fitness; and it is in this way that she co-operates in our redemption. The Blessed Virgin, theologians say, has merited *de congruo* all that Christ has merited for us *de condigno*.[8]

But when did Mary merit for us?

In responding to all the graces whereby God prepared her for the accomplishment of His designs, Mary first prepared the way for our salvation and then merited it. It was by this fidelity that the Blessed Virgin merited as far as was possible the divine maternity; that is, she prepared herself to be a fitting instrument for the accomplishment of this mystery.

In an even more active and definite way, we

[7] Cf. Hugon, *op. cit.*, pp. 218-222.
[8] Cf. Encycl., *Ad Diem Illum.*, February 2, 1904.

may say that Mary merited our salvation by her co-operation.

(1) *In yielding her consent to the Incarnation.* Certainly God in His omnipotence could have saved the human race without having recourse to Mary's consent, even as He could have attained this end otherwise than by the Incarnation of His Son. But having chosen the Incarnation as the means whereby to reconcile fallen humanity to His love, He willed to associate Mary with this work by asking her consent to the Incarnation. Mary held, as it were, in her hands the fate—the salvation of our fallen race. "O Virgin," cries S. Bernard, "behold here you are offered the price of our redemption. If you consent, we shall soon be delivered. . . . The whole world prostrate at your feet awaits your answer, which will bring salvation."[9]

The most Blessed Virgin indeed was as free with regard to her acceptance of the divine proposal as was the Word in accepting the hypostatic union. Her part in the Incarnation was not imposed on her, but only asked for; and she gave it spontaneously.

"God," says Bossuet, "having called Mary to give Jesus Christ to the world, desired to make of her not only a channel of this grace, but a voluntary instrument in this great work, by her excellent dispositions, but still more by the movement of her will."[10]

Strictly speaking, God could have done without this consent, but He did not so will. Why? Theologians give various reasons:

[9] *Hom. IV, Super Evang. Missus est.* Cf. S. Fulbert, Serm. IX, 3, *De annuntiatione.*

[10] *Sermon on Devotion to the most Blessed Virgin.* Cf. Bourdaloue. *Sermon on the Annunciation.*

(i) "God," says Suarez, "even when His action is supremely efficacious, never unites Himself to anyone by grace without respecting the liberty of the subject. One can understand then, desiring to unite Himself to Mary by ties even closer and more mysterious than those of grace, He would weigh her decision and not act without her consent."[11]

(ii) "The Incarnation," adds S. Thomas, "being a spiritual marriage between the Son of God and human nature, it was necessary that the consent of the latter should be sought and obtained in the person of the Blessed Virgin." This means, as S. Thomas teaches also, that the consent of Mary was asked as representing the whole human race.[12]

(iii) Lastly and we must take notice of this—our Lady's consent brought upon her a painful sacrifice; in that the Incarnation for our redemption, consummated on Calvary, was to bring upon her indescribable anguish and sorrow. It was natural that she should have known and submitted to them before accepting them. Her *fiat* was pronounced with full independence of her will and knowledge of the consequences.

From this moment began the first of Mary's sacrifices; all others were but the result of this.

(2) Having given her consent to this great mystery, the Blessed Virgin, according to the beautiful expression of the Venerable Bede (lib. IV. on *Luke* xi), *furnished the matter of His flesh to the only Son of God* that He might be born in a human body. Bossuet writes: "The Divine Word, willing to redeem the world, borrows from

[11] Suarez, *Comm.* in IIIa, p., q. 30, a. 1. Edit. Vive's, Vol. XIX, p. 130.
[12] *Summ. Theol.*, III, p., q. 30, a. 1.

thee, O Mary, wherewith to satisfy His Father's justice, and finding nothing in the world more pure or beautiful, He draws from thy chaste body the blood which washes away our sins." "She has thus prepared," remarks Pius X, "a victim for the salvation of mankind."[13] All in fact that Jesus Christ suffered, all that He merited, all that made for the ransoms of humanity came through the Blessed Virgin. "The flesh of Christ," says S. Augustine, "is the flesh of Mary." This is what the Church means when she sings in her liturgy: "*Ave verum corpus natum de Maria Virgine*—Hail, true body, truly born of the Virgin Mary, and truly offered on the Cross for the salvation of mankind."

(3) Further, *Mary furnished to our Lord the first altar of sacrifice.*

It is true that our salvation was consummated on Calvary, but it was begun by our Lord at the first instant of His conception in Mary's womb. Thenceforth He became a victim and His life was one long and continual sacrifice. Coming into the world He said to His Father: "Sacrifice and oblation and holocaust for sin thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou fitted to me. Behold I come to do thy will" (*Heb.* x. 5-7). "In very deed, the most pure Word was already a victim when He became subject to the restraint of a material body; for the immensity of the Word to conform His greatness to the germ of human life was to be a victim; for the all-powerful Word to unite His strength with the purely passive feebleness of a tiny being enclosed and hidden from all eyes was to be a victim, and it was to be already a victim for the

[13] Encycl., *Ad Diem Illum.*

infinitely perfect Word to pass through all the stages which hid His perfection."[14]

The womb of Mary was in very deed the first altar on which Jesus offered Himself to His Eternal Father and began His work of self-immolation for our salvation.

(4) The Blessed Virgin also co-operated in our salvation by *consenting to the death of her Son.* Theologians usually teach that Mary, in virtue of her clear understanding of the Scriptures, and still more by the abundant infusion of celestial light with which her soul was inundated, saw, as in a picture, all the events and mysteries which should be accomplished in the life of Him whom she was about to conceive. She knew beforehand all the work and labours, all the ingratitude and persecutions, the wrongs and the death which awaited Him. She saw all this, and in consenting to His conception, she consented, by that very fact, to see Him one day mocked, tortured, and crucified. She bowed before the designs of Providence, conforming herself to them, and even before conceiving her Son, she offered Him to the Divine Justice for the redemption of the human race.

Thus the *fiat* which fell from Mary's lips at the Annunciation was not merely an answer to the message of the angel, but it was also a generous, complete, and irrevocable acceptance of all that God had revealed to her soul. This acceptance she renewed every day of her life, because " her mission was to take care of the victim she had brought forth, to bring Him up, and at the appointed time to present Him at the Altar."[15] In that hour of

[14] Monsabré, *Carême*, 1881, confér., 50.
[15] Pius X, Encycl., *Ad Diem Illum*.

His great sacrifice, her consent, already given, became more willingly accorded and more explicit still. "When Jesus came to His supreme hour," writes Pius X, quoting S. Bonaventure (*Sent.* d. 48 *ad. litt. dub.* 4), "we see the Blessed Virgin standing by the Cross, full of horror, no doubt, at the sight, yet happy because her Son was offering Himself for the salvation of the human race, and so sharing in His sufferings, that, if possible, she would have preferred to take them all upon herself."[16]

It was in this, especially, that Mary co-operated in the work of our redemption.

(5) *By uniting her sufferings with those of her Son.*

It is true that the Blessed Virgin did not shed her blood as our Lord did in His Passion and on the Cross. But physical sufferings were by no means the only ones endured by our Saviour: His soul was sorrowful unto death, His Heart was crushed under the weight of intimate and cruel suffering. Mary participated in all these, she shared them with her Son because she was His mother, and a mother suffers all the pains of her child. "All that the nails and the lance produced in the flesh of Christ," said S. Bernard, "maternal love caused also in the soul of Mary."

These, it is true, were purely moral sufferings, but so acute as to wound all that was most sensitive in her soul. The Church, in order to express this intensity of sorrow, applies to the Blessed Virgin those words of Jeremias: "O all ye that pass by the way, behold and see if there is any sorrow like to my sorrow" (*Thren.* I, 12); and in the prose

[16] *Ibid.*

Stabat Mater she is called the mother of sorrows, *Mater dolorosa.*

Mary then suffered *with* her Son; she suffered also *in union with Him,* sharing His immense love for sinful humanity. According to the beautiful expression of Bossuet, Mary and Jesus were like two opposite mirrors, each reflecting to the other all that each received.[17] That is true of the whole life of our Saviour and His Mother; it is true especially of His Passion. "At this moment fraught with such sorrow," cries Arnauld de Bonneval, "our Lady's will was one with that of our Lord; one holocaust was offered simultaneously on two altars—the heart of Mary and the body of Jesus Christ—Jesus immolating His flesh, Mary her soul."[18]

It was thus that the Blessed Virgin co-operated in the redeeming sacrifice of her Son; *it was thus she merited for us.* It is true that the merits of Mary have no value except by the merits of Jesus Christ, since no creature can, apart from them, do or present to God any supernatural act; her merits were, moreover, of an entirely different order, for Christ offered to God merits capable of obtaining grace by right of justice, whilst those of Mary could only obtain it through the divine liberality.

Nevertheless the Church, while recognizing in the Saints the power, when uniting their merits to Christ, to obtain for us grace or pardon, with still greater reason recognizes this merit in the Blessed Virgin, *Mother of God,* only in a more excellent and universal way.

[17] Bossuet, 2. Sermon on the *Compassion of Our Lady.*

[18] Arnauld de Bonneval, Cistercian monk of the eleventh century, *Liber de Laudibus Beatæ Virginis,* I, CCLXXXIX. On this question, cf. Garriguet, *La Vierge Marie,* pp. 305-315.

Extent of the merits of the Blessed Virgin. One may ask exactly how far Mary's merits extend?

"Certainly infinitely less far than those of her Son, who suffered to obtain by justice not only all graces actually bestowed upon mankind, since His sufferings have of themselves an infinite value. But apart from this infinity, has not our Lady merited *de congruo* all graces actually given to all men? One may certainly think so, according to several theologians who have gone into this question. Besides, it seems a particular application of the general principle of Mary's intervention in the whole work of Redemption. Also the Church (take, for example, the giving of indulgences and the prayer of the priest after sacramental absolution) makes an indefinite appeal to the merits of the Blessed Virgin, not as an inexhaustible source, but as a source which can never be exhausted by the whole of mankind."[19]

(*b*) *Causality by way of satisfaction.*

Mary's causality by way of satisfaction follows from what has already been said regarding her meritorious causality: as she merited for us by uniting her sufferings to those of her Son, so, in suffering with Him, she satisfied also for our sins.

Here again, however, we must remember that only Jesus Christ can offer a reparation equal to the offence caused by mortal sin. The malice of mortal sin has no bounds; there is in it something of infinity, since it is an offence against an infinite majesty. Therefore in order to repair it an infinite satisfaction is needed; and this requires that it be made by a person of infinite dignity. For on this

[19] De la Broise-Bainvel, *op. cit.*, p. 14, n. 1.

point satisfaction is the same as merit; satisfaction, therefore, is measured by the greatness of the person who makes it; it is in proportion to Him and becomes infinite through Him.

The Blessed Virgin clearly cannot lay claim to this dignity, and in the order of satisfaction, as in that of merit, her rôle is a subordinate one; her reparation derives its value from that offered by the Redeemer. But, given the full and entire satisfaction of Jesus, Mary can offer a satisfaction of fitness for our sins. As explained before with regard to merit: "The Blessed Virgin has satisfied *de congruo* in all that Christ has satisfied *de condigno*."

So much for the fact. It remains to consider the *extent* of Mary's satisfaction.

Satisfaction is always in proportion to merit and to grace. In Mary grace surpassed all imaginable limits; and this grace, continually accumulating from the moment of her Immaculate Conception to her death, was indeed unfathomable. It is the same with the wealth of her satisfaction, now become ours, seeing that it is given to the treasury of the Church. Mary, having never sinned, had no need to expiate, or make satisfaction for herself.

This satisfaction then, Mary offered to God for us, by all the acts of her mortal life, since every act of a just soul contains an element of satisfaction. This was immensely increased, when, having become Mother of God, Mary acquired a unique dignity which drew her very near to God: all, therefore, that proceeds from the Mother of God must of necessity possess a perfection far beyond that of any soul, however just. But in this long series of merits and satisfactions the crowning point was certainly that sublime act by which she made the gift and

offering of her only Son for the salvation of the human race; an offering which she continually renewed till the hour when the holocaust was officially and finally offered on Golgotha. Then it was that Mary, in union with Jesus, suffered, merited, and expiated for us.

This was indeed fitting, for as Adam and Eve had committed together the same fault, so Jesus and Mary are united in the same passion and reparation. "And in consequence of this association, of this union of desire and suffering between Jesus and Mary, Mary became entitled to be regarded as taking part in the restoration of fallen humanity."[20]

From all this we may understand why and in what sense the Fathers and Doctors of the Church call Mary "the redemption of captives, the salvation of the human race";[21] "Mother and redemption of all men."[22]

These formulæ prove the same doctrine and point to the same conclusion: viz., that the Blessed Virgin has expiated for us; and in the order of satisfaction, she can claim for our salvation by right of fitness all that Christ can claim by right of justice.

III. Power of our Lady's Intercession or her Universal Mediation in the Dispensation of Grace

The doctrine we are now about to consider is one very much to the fore just now in the Church. Among the Bishops, the Faculties of Theology and the Religious Orders, a movement has sprung up to prepare, to ask for and, it is hoped, shortly

[20] Pius X, Encycl., *Ad Diem Illum*.
[21] S. Ephrem., *Oratio ad Virg*.
[22] S. Laurence Justinian, *Sermon on Nativity of Our Lady*.

to obtain a definition of Mary's universal mediation as an article of faith.[23]

It is necessary, therefore, to mark out the broad outlines of the actual teaching on this question.

A. Exposition of the thesis.

That Mary can and does intercede for us is an article of faith. The Council of Trent has defined (*Sess.* XXV) that the Saints, once admitted to reign with Christ in heaven, pray to God for men, and that it is useful for us to invoke them and have recourse to them in our needs.

But we do not stop there when it is a question of the Blessed Virgin; we acknowledge in her a special power in heaven, one which we express by calling her our *Universal Mediatrix,* or to put it more clearly, we affirm *that all graces without exception, given or to be given, pass through Mary's hands and come through her.*[24] It is necessary to explain and to prove this assertion.

Let us first notice that Mary's co-operation in the distribution of grace is a consequence of her co-operation in their acquisition; not a necessary consequence, but a fitting one. " It is fitting indeed that God should confide the distribution of spiritual

[23] The first step was taken by Cardinal Mercier, as announced to his clergy in a letter of January 27, 1925. " For several years the Episcopate of Belgium, the theological faculty of Louvain and all the Religious Orders in Belgium have approached the Sovereign Pontiff, asking him to declare with authority that the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Mother of Jesus and our own, merits the rôle of Universal Mediatrix in obtaining and distributing divine grace. And His Holiness Benedict XV accorded to the Churches of Belgium and all who joined in the request a proper Mass and Office in honour of Mary Mediatrix."

[24] This is the second aspect of Mary's mediation; by her co-operation in the Redemption she is already Mediatrix.

riches to the same hands which gained them, therefore to the Redeemer and the Co-redemptrix."[25]

These riches consist of the grace of Christ—supernatural grace—and when we say that all graces come to men through the Blessed Virgin, we do not make any distinction between sanctifying and actual grace; we affirm that *all* benefits of the supernatural order are received through her.

We can see the difference which exists between the rôle of the Blessed Virgin and that of the Saints. Each Saint has his limited sphere of action, he intervenes in favour of one or another, not of all; in such and such a particular case, not in all. So that if we have not invoked the Saint or have not otherwise any particular claim to his protection, he has not necessarily had any share in the gift of grace received.

The Blessed Virgin, on the contrary, has always had a share in every grace obtained by the intercession of a saint, even if we had not asked her. In the actual order of Providence, we should not have received this grace if the Blessed Virgin did not exist, or had not intervened. As our Lord is always invoked implicitly, even when we do not say "through Jesus Christ our Lord," because He is the Mediator without whom neither angel nor saint can obtain anything for us, so the Blessed Virgin exercises a universal mediation in the distribution of grace. Not a grace comes to earth from heaven for which we have not to thank her.

In order to make this teaching more clear, let us take one or two practical cases.

Among the graces we have received from God, some have been given in answer to prayer, others

[25] De la Broise-Bainvel, *op. cit.*, p. 19.

have come to us without being asked for through the goodness of God alone.

Let us examine the last case: the grace given without our asking. The initial grace and all those inspirations and lights which so often move our intelligence and will; also those holy thoughts freely accepted but not asked for. All these benefits, apart from merit or any earthly prayer, are due to prayer offered in heaven: Mary has intervened, she turns towards her Son and her prayer is granted.

In other cases the grace has been asked for in prayer. But two hypotheses are possible. In the first the Blessed Virgin has not been invoked: the prayer was addressed directly to God, or the request was confided to some saint or angel. This is the case we spoke of above. We may say the same of Mary as of Jesus: Christ, our only and necessary mediator, is always invoked, even when His name is not mentioned, so His Mother is always associated and invoked together with Him, and in this way also it is she who obtains grace.

Lastly we pray directly to Mary. This is the most simple case of all, and one *sees* directly how it works. In this case, indeed, it is natural that the favour asked for should come by the mediation of the Blessed Virgin.[26] Seeing that this is so we understand that the divine life is not communicated to us by Mary in a general way only: for every particular grace and for every individual soul, whether asked for or not, is due to the *actual* intercession of the Mother of God.

We must take this thesis in its most strict sense; no grace whatever descends from heaven to earth without having passed through the hands of Mary,

[26] Cf. De la Broise-Bainvel, *op. cit.*, pp. 5-6, 27-28.

that is to say by her actual mediation.[27] But there is one question to be solved before producing the proofs of the above assertion. In order that Mary may intercede for each one and for every grace she must know the prayers, the needs and the interests of every soul. Does she enjoy this prerogative?

Let us look simply at the graces accorded since her Assumption.[28] The answer must be in the affirmative. It is a principle admitted by all theologians that in heaven God communicates to each of the elect the knowledge of the things of this world, at least so far as they relate to men. Mary is the mother of all men by a true maternity in the order of grace. By that very fact her influence is universal in the work of our salvation, therefore she must be cognizant of all that concerns this work; and she knows all human beings without exception, and all the acts whereby men hinder or advance their

[27] It remains to be determined what is the exact nature of Mary's causality in the bestowal of each grace. For those who do not admit the physical causality of the Sacred Humanity of Christ and the Sacraments, it is clear that the causality of Mary would resolve itself to a *moral* causality, or a causality in the sense that she puts into the soul for whom she asks grace, a title to receive it. But among the Thomists, several, to wit, Cardinal Lepicier, the R.R.P.P., Hugon, Clemens, Commer, are inclined to admit—in differing degrees or modes, at least—the likelihood and theological probability that the Blessed Virgin exercises a real efficacious physical instrumentality with regard to all the graces she dispenses, and in this principally her mediation consists. On the appearance of the beautiful work of M. Bittremieux, *De Mediatione Universali B.M. Virginis Quoad Gratias*, the Rev. P. Lavaud, O.P., reopened the question in some remarkable articles in the supplement of the *Vie Spirituelle*, September, 1927, p. 358 *sqq.*, and in the *Revue Thomiste*, 1927, p. 423 *sqq.*

[28] For the thousand years before the Messias. Cf. Bittremieux, *op. cit.*, pp. 145-146; De la Broise-Bainvel, *op. cit.*, p. 24.

supernatural end. It is, then, with a very clear knowledge and far-sighted love that Mary intervenes in our favour. Since she sees our necessities there is no doubt but that she can and will obtain a remedy. And as her prayer is always efficacious, since it is not possible for it to remain unheard—this prayer of her maternal heart, identical with that of Christ and of the Father, being of the nature of a command —we may readily conclude that she truly administers all the treasures of grace, and that all supernatural aid comes through her intercession.

To sum up—in the words of Leo XIII himself: "All grace reaches men by three perfectly ordered degrees: God communicates it to Christ, from Him it passes on to the Blessed Virgin, and from her hands it descends on us."[29] Therefore we must see in the bestowal of every supernatural benefit, the concurrence of three wills: the first the will of God, primal and principal source of all grace; then the will of the Universal Mediator, our Lord, who merited and obtained it Himself by right of justice; and lastly the will of the Blessed Virgin, Secondary Mediatrix, who merited and obtained it by right of congruity, through our Lord.

B. Demonstration of the thesis: its theological value.

The doctrine we have just propounded is nothing new in the Church, for we find its germ among the early Christians.

1. *Authority of the Fathers and Doctors.* No doubt the intervention of the Blessed Virgin in the bestowal of grace has been more clearly explained and proved in recent times; but from the earliest

[29] *Encyclical on the Rosary*, September 8, 1894.

days the Fathers and Catholic theologians have had, at least implicitly and dimly, the same idea. The broad outline of their thesis is as follows:[30]

The rôle of Mary in the distribution of supernatural gifts is not a necessary, but a fitting and natural consequence of her office as the new Eve and as co-worker in our redemption; her universal intercession is only one part of the function of mediatrix, which is attributed to her by the Father. As Mother, Mary is filled with maternal solicitude for each and all of her children, and knows all their needs; and the excellence of her prayers, above those of all the other Saints, gives us an idea, not only of their greater force, but of their greater extent.[31]

So far back as the eighth century we find from the pen of S. Germain of Constantinople, expressions worthy of S. Bernard: "Thy protection, O Mother of God, is powerful for salvation, and we have no need of any other intermediary before God. . . . Thy magnificence knows no bounds, thy protection never fails, thy benefits are numberless. For none can be saved without thee, O holy one; none can be delivered from their troubles but by thee, O immaculate one; none can obtain any gift save through thee, O most pure one; none can receive grace or mercy save through thee, O thou worthy of all veneration."[32]

S. Peter Damien, several centuries later, affirms that "in Mary's hands are all the treasures of divine mercy."[33]

But it is S. Bernard especially who throws light

[30] *Encyclical on the Rosary*, September 8, 1894.
[31] De la Broise-Bainvel, *op. cit.*, p. 39-40.
[32] *Sermo in Sanctæ Marie Zonam*, num. 5.
[33] *Sermo I de Nativitate.*

on this doctrine. "God," he says, "has filled Mary with the plenitude of all good; all our hope, our grace, our salvation is derived from her."[34] "God has decreed that nothing shall come to us without having passed through the hands of Mary."[35] "Mary," he says again, "is the aqueduct which, drawing from the Father the fullness of the spring, places it at our disposal, at least in so far as we are capable of receiving it. . . . If during many centuries the streams of grace flowed so sparingly on the human race, it was because this precious aqueduct did not yet exist."[36]

Blessed Albert the Great calls Mary "the universal dispenser of all graces."[37]

As for S. Thomas, if he has not written explicitly on this question, nor said in so many words that all graces, at least in the order of their distribution, come to men through Mary, yet he has said something very like it; anyhow he has not taught anything opposed to this doctrine. We read in his *Commentary on the Angelic Salutation*: "The Blessed Virgin Mary is called full of grace because she pours out this divine life on all men. It would be a great thing to possess grace enough for the salvation of a number of souls, the greatest of all to have sufficient for the whole human race. Such is the privilege of Christ's Mother. In all peril you can obtain help from her; in every good you can have her aid. She herself says so in Holy Scripture (*Eccli.* xxiv. 25). In me is all hope of life and of virtue." Thus, according to S. Thomas, Mary *can*

[34] *Sermo de Acquæductu.*
[35] *Serm.* 3 *in Vigil. Domini,* num. 10.
[36] *Sermo de Aquæductu.*
[37] *QQ. Super Missus est.,* q. 29.

obtain help for us to practise virtue, to avoid peril, to conquer temptation, that is for all supernatural good.

He does not affirm that these benefits come to us from her effectively; but it is no question of an indifferent or fruitless power because for Mary, Mother of God and Mother of men, to will is to do. If she *can* procure all graces for us, we may be quite sure she *will* and *does* obtain them.

Let us quote also the very explicit witness of S. Bernard of Siena: "God is the universal source, Christ the Universal Mediator, Mary the Universal Dispenser: such is the economy of grace in its descent on the human race. The Blessed Virgin is, in fact, the mystical neck of the Divine Head; by this means the heavenly gifts are communicated to the rest of the body. We see, therefore, why it is said of Mary in the *Canticles* (vii. 4): "Thy neck is like a tower of ivory."[38]

This expression "mystical neck" is not a new one; it is found in the writings of S. Jerome[39] applied to Mary. It is one to be remembered, because it expresses well the rôle of the Blessed Virgin in the bestowal of graces.

To complete the subject it remains to quote what many Saints and Doctors have taught regarding this doctrine: Gerson, Suarez, Vega, Contenson, Blessed Bellarmine, Blessed Grignon de Montfort and many others; and in our own days such eminent theologians as the Pères Petitalot, Jenjacquot, De la Broise-Bainvel, Terrien, Hugon, Messieurs Sauré, Garriguet, Bittremieux, etc.

[38] *Serm.* 10 *in Quadrages.*

[39] *De Glorioso Nomine Virginis Mariæ,* attributed to S. Jerome.

But special mention is here due to Bossuet and to S. Alphonsus de Liguori.

It has been said that Bossuet's most eloquent sermons are those preached on the Blessed Virgin Mary: there his devotion to the Mother of God has full play, but expressed always in the most accurate theological formulæ. This is how he explains, in the sermon on devotion to the Blessed Virgin, the nature of Mary's mediation in heaven: "God, having once willed to give us Jesus Christ by the Blessed Virgin, this order does not change; the gifts of God are without repentance. It is and will always be true, that, having once received the universal principle of grace through her, we shall continue so to receive it, in all its various applications and in all states which make up the Christian life. Her maternal charity having contributed to our salvation in the mystery of the Incarnation, she will continue to further it in all the works which depend on it."[40]

As for *S. Alphonsus*, he does not hesitate to affirm: "The proposition which I am here defending, that all graces come to us through Mary's intercession, is held as conformable to devotion and altogether probable, not only by me, but by a number of writers. . . . That is why I shall always consider myself happy to have held it and preached it, if only because this doctrine greatly increases the warmth of my devotion towards Mary; while the opposite opinion cools it, and this, to my thinking, is not a slight disadvantage."

We have here, without doubt, very solid support

[40] *Glories of Mary*, Vol. II, p. 18, ed. Dujardin. Cf. Vol. I, Part I, Ch. V, Mary our Mediatrix.

for the doctrines we have explained. Of course all these texts have not an equal value, because it was only in the course of the fifteenth century that this doctrine of Mary's universal mediation, in the sense we have defined it, was formulated clearly. But the Fathers and Doctors of earlier times taught its equivalent; their writings leave no doubt as to their convictions: they believed, as we do, that all graces come to us by the mediation, that is, by the intercession of the Blessed Virgin.

2. To the authority of the Fathers and Doctors, we may add that of the Sovereign Pontiffs.

" Mary," says Benedict XIV, " is like a heavenly channel through which all graces and gifts descend into the bosom of unfortunate mortals."[41]

From the writings of Leo XIII, it would be necessary to quote all the encyclicals he wrote to revive devotion to the holy Rosary. In *Adjutricem populi* (September 5, 1895) he said: " Having lent her ministry to the work of man's redemption, Mary exercises the same office in the dispensation of grace which ever flows from the Cross, invested as she is for this purpose with an almost immense power." In the Encyclical *Jucunda semper* (September 8, 1894): " First comes, as its right, the Lord's prayer, to our Father in heaven. Scarcely have we invoked Him in these sublime words than, from His throne, our prayer descends and turns in supplication towards Mary, quite naturally, in virtue of that law of conciliation and supplication so well defined by S. Bernadine of Siena: every grace accorded to men reaches them by three perfectly ordered degrees: God communicates them

[41] Bull, *Gloriosæ Dominæ*, called " The Golden Bull of the Congregation of the Blessed Virgin "; near the beginning.

to Christ, from Him they pass on to Mary, and from her hands they come to us."

In the Bull *Ad Diem Illum* so often quoted in this work, Pius X enlarges yet more on the traditional doctrine: "In consequence of the community of sentiment and sufferings between Jesus and Mary, Mary merits lawfully to become the reparatrice of fallen humanity, and therefore the dispenser of *all* the treasures which Jesus acquired for us by His death and His blood. Truly we cannot say that the bestowal of these treasures is not a right proper to our Lord Himself because they are exclusively the fruit of His death, and He Himself, by His very nature, is the mediator between God and man. But at the same time, on account of the union of sorrow and anguish between the Mother and the Son, He has given to this august Virgin the privilege to be the most powerful mediatrix and advocate for the whole world. The spring indeed is Jesus Christ, but as S. Bernard remarks, Mary is the aqueduct, or, if you will, that part of the body which joins the head to the body in order to transmit to the latter the influence of the brain, i.e., the neck. We must then attribute to the Mother of God a virtue productive of grace, a virtue which comes from God alone. Nevertheless, since Mary exceeds all in sanctity and union with Jesus Christ, and has been associated with Him in the work of our redemption . . . she is the supreme dispenser of grace. Jesus sits at the right hand of the Divine Majesty in the highest heaven; Mary stands at the right hand of her Son; assumed refuge and faithful helper in all dangers; under her guidance, under her auspices and patronage, shielded by her, no one need fear or despair."

These encyclicals have not, it is true, the authority of those teaching a dogma, that is, defining it authentically. But when the Pope addresses the whole Church even in a simple exhortation, he says nothing lightly, he never puts forward an opinion, however pious it may be, which is strange, new or ill-founded in theology. Consequently when he repeats a proposition several times without restriction, it is because it represents the common teaching and sentiment of Catholic schools and of the faithful.

Therefore we may conclude that the above opinion is no pious exaggeration; it is a doctrine conformable to the best theology, supported by good authority and generally received in the Church.[42]

3. We may also appeal to the liturgy which sets forth the creed of the Church. We should at least notice the fact that the liturgical office frequently recalls the universal intercession of Mary.[43]

4. As to theology, it can bring many reasons to prove the close bonds uniting the Blessed Virgin to God and men. Associated with her Son and co-operating with Him in the acquisition of grace, it is only natural that Mary should, with certain modifications, also take part in their distribution.

These two functions, to acquire grace and to distribute it, are united in our Lord; the second is the normal result, the completion of the first, and together they make up the Office of Redeemer. Why should Mary's participation in the one not bring, by a kind of necessity, a like participation in the other?

[42] De la Broise-Bainvel, *op. cit.*, p. 38.
[43] Cf. Hugon, *op. cit.*, p. 254 *sqq.*; De la Broise-Bainvel, *op. cit.*, pp. 41-44.

This is expressed by Pope Pius X in the Encyclical *Ad Diem*: "Participating with Christ in suffering and in will, Mary has merited to be the *reparatrice* of a fallen world and *consequently* the *dispenser* of the gifts acquired for as by the blood of Jesus."

This "communion" does not end in heaven; it is even more intimate there than on earth in the sorrows of the Passion. Also it requires that Mary should co-operate even more in the dispensing of the redeeming blood than it was possible for her to do in the actual redemption.

Further, in heaven, Mary is in a supreme degree of union with God. As Mother of men, she has for them an inexpressible tenderness. Knowing all their needs, even to the smallest details, all that pertains to their salvation interests her. They were confided to her care also at the foot of the Cross by her dying Son, who made her the Mother of the redeemed. In what could this maternity consist, if not in a real share in the bestowal of grace?

The office of a mother in the supernatural order, as S. Hugon says, is not only to give life, but also to preserve it, to maintain and strengthen it. The spiritual life, in order to grow, requires an immediate and continual influence from on high; for every meritorious, or even good act, a new energy is required, a fresh impulse, an actual grace. Mary, then, who is truly and wholly our Mother, must communicate this strength to us, and all the energy needed to bring our souls to maturity and all the graces which develop our life.[44]

Such are the chief reasons in support of this doctrine of the universal mediation of the Blessed Virgin; they are numerous and reliable. They

[44] Hugon, *op. cit.*, pp. 264-265.

permit us to accept without restriction the conclusions of M. Bittremieux, that this is a doctrine which the Church might define. Whatever answer may be given to the vexed question of defining strict conclusions, and even if it be maintained that nothing should be defined which is not clearly revealed, yet one can, at least implicitly, admit that a certain mediation, that which constitutes a co-operation with Redemption, could be proclaimed as an article of faith, since it is virtually contained in Revelation. It could be defined that Mary is the mediatrix in the dispensation of all graces, if we understand this universality in a moral sense. It even seems that one might say as much of the *absolute* universality of mediation, that is, its extension to all graces and to each one in particular.[45]

Let us hope the day will soon dawn when the Church will add this new jewel to the immortal crown of our Heavenly Mother.

The *conclusions* of the ascetical order which derive from this study are apparent of themselves.

As Mary holds so important a place in our spiritual life, we should have a great devotion to her, or rather a great devotedness; and this means the gift of oneself. To be devoted to the Blessed Virgin is to give oneself entirely to her, and through her to God.

We should give her our intellect by the most profound respect and veneration; our will by an absolute confidence; our heart by a deep filial love; our whole being by the closest possible imitation of her virtues.

[45] Bittremieux, *op. cit.*, p. 228. Suppl. *Vie Spirituelle*, 1927, p. 354.

Our confidence, which is founded on Mary's power and goodness, should be unshaken, in spite of, or rather because of, our miseries and faults, for Mary is the mother of mercy, *mater misericordiæ*, and her immaculate heart is "the refuge of sinners"; it should be universal, that is, extending to all the graces we need, whether of conversion, of preservation, of spiritual advancement, or of final perseverance.[46]

But however great may be our veneration, our confidence and love for Mary, our devotion can only be complete by *imitation*, which draws us near to her; and through her to Jesus. In order better to succeed in this imitation it is well to accustom oneself to do each work *through* Mary, asking of her all the graces necessary to imitate her, and in passing through her to go to Jesus—*ad Jesum per Mariam*; *with* Mary, considering her as our model and fellow worker; *in* Mary, in dependence on her, entering into her views and intentions, acting like her to the glory of God.

These practices were dear to the Saints; they are summed up in "true devotion" and the "holy slavery of the love of Jesus and Mary," preached and made popular by Blessed Grignon de Montfort,[47] a holy slavery which seems the legitimate and logical conclusion of this doctrine.

[46] The celebrated passage of S. Bernard is well known, *De Laudibus Virginis Mariæ, Hom.* II, 17: "If the storm of temptation arises . . . call upon Mary. . . ."

[47] In *Secret de Marie* and *Traité de la Vraie Dévotion à la Sainte Vierge.*

CHAPTER IV

THE HOLY GHOST: AUTHOR OF OUR SPIRITUAL LIFE

I. Indwelling of the Holy Ghost in the just soul. II. The Holy Spirit the mover in the spiritual life: (1) by justification; (2) by sanctification. III. The gifts of the Holy Ghost: (*a*) existence and nature of the gifts of the Holy Ghost: (1) their definition; (2) distinction between the virtues and the gifts; (3) the respective rôle of the virtues and gifts in the economy of the spiritual life; (*b*) necessity of the gifts of the Holy Spirit; (*c*) excellence of the gifts of the Holy Spirit; (*d*) their culture: negative and positive means.

THE spiritual life, as its name indicates, is a movement, a continual progressive movement, which begins with our conscious life and ends only when, folding our tents finally in the desert of this world, the soul takes flight to heaven.

I. Indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the Just Soul

As we have already proved, it is God Himself, whole and entire, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, who dwells in us by sanctifying grace. If we speak particularly of the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, it is only by appropriation. Yet this loving indwelling in us is *attributed* in a very special manner both in Holy Scripture and in the Fathers of the Church to the Holy Spirit, the Strengthener, as if

He dwelt in us in a particular way, and the Father and Son only by concomitance.

To quote a few texts:

John xiv. 15-21: "If you love me, keep my Commandments. And I will ask the Father: and he shall give you another Paraclete, *that he may abide with you for ever*; the spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, nor knoweth him. But you shall know him because *he shall abide with you and shall be in you.*"

And our Saviour adds: "I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you, and you shall live in me. Yet a little while and the world seeth me no more. But you shall see me; because I live, you shall live. In that day you shall know that I am in my Father; and you in me, and I in you." And again (*John* xvi. 7): "I tell you the truth: it is expedient to you that I go. For if I go not, the Paraclete will not come to you: but if I go, I will send him to you."

It is easy to understand these words of our Saviour. The new Paraclete He promises to His apostles is the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of truth, the Spirit of the Son, who is the very truth (*John* xiv. 6). While He was with them, our Lord Himself consoled His disciples; but by His departure they were exposed to many troubles, therefore He promised them another Consoler, the Holy Spirit whom He would send from the Father.

This Divine Spirit, dwelling in faithful souls, bears witness to the truth (*John* xv. 26, 27). He condemns the sin of the world (xvi. 8) and bears witness that Jesus is the very Truth (1 *John* v. 6). If we are moved by and listen to His voice, and do not grieve Him, He will bear witness that we are

children of God and, therefore, heirs. He is the Spirit, the Lord and Giver of Life in whom we believe, and whose communication, flowing from our Divine Head, Jesus Christ, makes us living members of the Church and the holy temple of God (1 *Cor.* iii. 16-17).

This Spirit is not a spirit of fear but of adoption, the adoption of children (*Rom.* viii. 15), by whom we may confidently call God our Father, and who makes us live and act as becomes our dignity as children of God (*Rom.* viii. 9-16; *Gal.* iv. 5-7).

By communicating Himself, He bestows on us the gift of divine charity because " the charity of God is poured forth in our hearts, by the Holy Ghost who is given to us " (*Rom.* v. 5).

And as He is also the Spirit of revelation and knowledge, He makes known to us the deep mysteries of God, the greatness of Jesus Christ, and teaches us the way of life (1 *Cor.* ii. 10). He is also the living pledge of eternal life within us, as preservative from corruption and as the germ of our resurrection and our immortality (2 *Cor.* i. 22; v. 5; *Rom.* viii. 11).

Far from minimizing the sense of these Scripture texts, the Fathers and Doctors of the Church rely on this teaching in showing forth the life-giving action of the Divine Consoler.

Holy Scripture also says that the Holy Spirit is *given* to us and that He is *sent*. This sending, or rather, to use the theological term, this *mission* implies at once the existence of a sender, and a new and very special *presence* of the Person sent. The gift also supposes a very special kind of possession in the souls accepting it, so that they may freely enjoy the gift received. " In the gift of sanctifying

grace which renders us pleasing to God," writes S. Thomas, " we possess the Holy Ghost who dwells in us; for this purpose He is given and sent."[1] " He is given: now a thing given is a thing we can freely enjoy."[2]

In treating of the indwelling of the Blessed Trinity, we have spoken at length of the manner of the Holy Spirit's dwelling in us; we need not therefore repeat it. We may draw this conclusion: we must without doubt admit a very special mission, gift and habitation proper to the Holy Spirit. He is *par excellence* the gift who dwells in us, not only as most sweet Guest and Consoler, but as an ever-flowing fountain of living water, as Sanctifier and Life-Giver. As One who comes to take full possession of us, and that we also may possess him.[3]

Let us examine more closely the character of His work in us.

II. The Holy Spirit: Motive Power of our Spiritual Life

We have already expressed the character of this work in saying that the Holy Ghost is the motive power of our spiritual life. This is easy to under-

[1] *Summ. Theol.*, I, q. 43, a. 3. This sending is thus explained; the Father present in the just soul, sends to it the Son, and they together send the Holy Ghost.

[2] *Summ. Theol.*, I, q. 38, a. 1.

[3] Cf. Arintero, *Evolution Mystique*, art. 4, Part I, p. 96 *sqq.* Trans. E. d'Orturer, *L'Habitation du Saint Esprit dans les Âmes*, p. 9 *sqq.* The manner of this indwelling or presence of the Holy Spirit in us is still discussed among theologians. Cf. Froget, *op. cit.*, I, Part I, Ch. I, p. 195 *sqq.* We have already remarked that we speak here by appropriation. It is in fact a question of operations *ad extra*, therefore common to the Three Divine Persons, and does not imply any personal act of the Holy Ghost apart from the Father and the Son.

stand. As Jesus Christ is the Head of the Church, so we may say the Holy Ghost is its *Heart*. As the heart gives movement to our natural life, so does the Holy Spirit to that supernatural life of which Jesus Christ is the foundation and the source. Jesus Christ has redeemed us; it is by the Holy Spirit that we are justified and sanctified. This means that it is He (speaking always by appropriation) who applies to us individually the merit and fruit of Redemption.

This application is made (so to speak) at two different times, and comprises two great acts, justification and sanctification.

1. *Justification.* The Holy Spirit intervenes first by grace: "He excites and calls us, attracts and inspires us; then He works our justification, that is, He pours forth the divine life into us, and with our concurrence, effaces the stains and scars of sin."[4]

He also produces contrition in our hearts, turns us away from sin and towards God. We may mark the character of this new work of the Holy Spirit in calling it a new creation in the supernatural order, a creation in love and by love. "Love," says the pseudo-Denys, "did not allow God to remain sterile."[5] This love was the cause of the creation of our souls; and it also renews them, because, as S. Thomas says, it is love which remits all sin; "for charity covereth a multitude of sins" (1 *Peter* iv. 8).[6]

It is the Holy Spirit, then, who bestows on us the grace of justification, along with which we receive not only sanctifying grace and the infused virtues, but the whole Blessed Trinity who comes to dwell in

[4] Cf. Part II, Ch. I, on actual grace.
[5] *De Divin Nomin.*, Ch. IV.
[6] *Expos. Symb. Apostol.*, Ch. XI: *De Spiritu Sancto.*

us. It is a real spiritual regeneration which causes us to pass from the state of servants to that of children, whose spirit we have received, that spirit of adoption which causes us to cry: "Father, Father" (*Rom.* viii. 15).

2. *Sanctification.* The divine action of the Holy Spirit does not end here; after having justified us, He sanctifies us.

Being already justified we have within us a germ which needs to be developed, to progress without hindrance. Here the Holy Spirit intervenes; having lent His aid to start us on the road of justice and holiness, He enlightens, strengthens us, and leads us to the end of our journey; that is, to the port of salvation. Because "the movement of a body which moves extends not only to the end of the movement, but to all the course of the movement, the term of the movement of grace is eternal life, and the course of this movement consists in an increase of charity or grace."[7]

"The gift of sanctifying grace is not given in order that we may have no further need of divine help; every creature requires to be preserved by God in the good already received from Him. . . . For that reason the work of the Holy Spirit is not limited by the effect of his permanent gifts in us; apart from this effect, He moves and protects us yet more."[8]

(*a*) *He gives us light,* that is to say He illuminates our understanding. He is the great Master of the science of salvation. "The Paraclete, the Holy Ghost whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring all things to

[7] S. Thomas, *Summ. Theol.*, Ia, IIae, q. 114, a. 8.
[8] *Ibid.*, q. 109, a. 9, ad. 1um and 2um.

your mind whatsoever I shall have said to you" (*John* xiv. 26).

"His unction teacheth you of all things" (1 *John* ii. 27).

(*b*) *He strengthens* and helps us, and in a sense constrains us to keep the Commandments. He is the Spirit of Love, and it belongs to love to unite wills and to urge them to the most heroic sacrifices.

The Holy Spirit helps us to love God, by inclining us *sweetly* and *strongly* to the accomplishment of His holy will. As was announced by the prophet Ezechiel: "I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit in the midst of you: and I will cause you to walk in my commandments and to keep my judgements and do them" (xxxvi. 26-27). S. Paul teaches the same doctrine when he says that the Holy Spirit, who dwells in the just, "helpeth our infirmity" (*Rom.* viii. 26).

(*c*) *The Holy Spirit also guides us*, for this way of the Commandments is the way of salvation and holiness. When He leads us, every movement of ours corresponds with His; He is our only Master and Guide, and we can say with the Psalmist, *In via testimoniorum tuorum delectatus sum* (*Ps.* cxviii. 14).

We find peace and joy and happiness in climbing, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the steep hill of divine perfection.[9]

The action of the Holy Spirit is fulfilled and continued in us to the end. The divine and supernatural impulse which we receive from Him does not cease till the very end; that is, until we are on

[9] Cf. *Exposit. Symbol. Apostol.*, C. XI; *De Spiritu Sancto.*

the threshold of eternal life, whither we are lead by the grace of final perseverance.

Finally, in heaven it is the Holy Spirit who obtains for us that beatific love which is the completion of divine love and the fullness of rest to our souls. This is so well expressed by S. Theresa of the Infant Jesus in her Life: "One day, O Divine Eagle, Thou will seize upon me, and carrying me to the furnace of love, Thou wilt plunge me into its burning abyss, that I may be for ever Thy happy victim."[10]

Such is, in broad outline, the work of the Holy Spirit: He justifies and He sanctifies. And He accomplishes this work, partly by vivifying and deifying our soul; partly by adorning, strengthening and deifying our faculties.

We have spoken at length of the first mode of action in considering the indwelling and working of the Blessed Trinity in us. As to the second mode, the strengthening and deification of our powers, the Holy Ghost produces this *by His gifts*.

III. The Gifts of the Holy Ghost

In studying the structure of our spiritual life we have seen that, in order to produce the supernatural acts proper to this life, we have need of supernatural faculties—or, to be more exact, quasi-faculties flowing from a supernatural source. The source or principle is grace, which renders divine the very depth of our soul.

As to the faculties which we receive together with

[10] The Saint is speaking of the Divine Word, but we may also apply her words to the Holy Spirit.

grace, they are the infused theological and moral virtues, and the gifts, properly so called, of the Holy Spirit. When we have studied these gifts, we shall understand clearly the supernatural mechanism by the aid of which the divine life circulates, develops and produces in us divine acts.

A detailed examination of the gifts of the Holy Spirit belongs rather to a treatise on the illuminative way: we shall therefore content ourselves here with defining, as exactly as possible, what they are and how they work in us.

(*a*) *Existence and nature of the gifts of the Holy Ghost.*

Many spiritual writers have taken pleasure in finding in Holy Scripture prophecies, figures and different descriptions of the seven gifts of the Holy Ghost. We read in the book of *Proverbs* (ix. 1) that Wisdom built her a house and adorned it with seven pillars. These pillars, says S. Antoninus, are the seven gifts of the Holy Ghost.[11] And this palace is a temple whence the soul, inspired by the seven voices of the Spirit (*Ps.* xxviii), shoots forth to heaven the flaming arrows of the Lord's Prayer.[12]

In the midst of this temple is the tabernacle of God. In the tabernacle in the sanctuary of the temple was a candlestick of beaten and engraved gold. (*Ex.* xxv. 31-40.) In the candlestick were seven lamps with two openings—one of which resembled the eye, the other the ear of a man.

[11] S. Antonin, *Summ. Theol.*, p. 4, tit. x. Cf. Hugh of S. Cher. In *Isaias* xi.

[12] S. Augustine, Ven. Bede, S. Antoninus, S. Thomas in sent. III, dist. 34.

They were adorned with little cups, with pomegranates and golden lilies.

Thus according to the Doctors, and especially S. Bede the Venerable,[13] seven lamps burn in the temple of our soul, on the golden candlestick of charity: these are the gifts of the Holy Ghost, like to the eye, because they enlighten and guide us, and like the ear, because they render the soul docile and attentive to the teaching of the Holy Spirit. The ornaments are the lilies of purity and innocence; the pomegranates of which the crown and innumerable seeds are the good works and merits of the just; and lastly, the chalices of living water, filled from the seven fountains of the Beatitudes (S. Thomas in *Matt.* v.), from which the Holy Ghost inebriates the soul which He inhabits and quickens with His gifts.[14]

In *S. Matthew* (xii. 45) we find seven evil spirits laying siege to the strong man's house, but the *Apocalypse* (v. 6) shows us seven good spirits sent against them. In the *Apocalypse* we always assist at the triumph of the Son of Man: His soul is marked with the seven seals of the Spirit (v).

He holds in His hand seven stars, which are the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit, burning always like seven lamps before the throne of God and of the Lamb (iv).[15]

Such are some of the magnificent symbols revealed to us in Holy Scripture;[16] and, as the

[13] Cf. S. Jure, *L'Homme Spirituel*, Vol. I, pp. 289, 290. New Ed., 1856, Pélagaud & Co.

[14] *Ad. Rom.* VIII. Cf. *Commentators.*

[15] *Revue Thomiste*, t. xxi, p. 406.

[16] The celebrated text of Isaias is well known (xi. 2-3): "The spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and fortitude,

Holy Fathers say, they hold in their mysterious depths the whole doctrine of the gifts of the Holy Ghost—their origin, their nature, and their teaching.

(1) *Their nature.* Let us first consider their nature.

As the word *gift* signifies, they are, above all, freely bestowed benefits; as are also all the other goods of grace. Besides, in theological language the word gift has a determined meaning, and indicates certain very high perfections which God gives freely to the souls of the just, in order to render them more docile to His inspirations.

Let us make this first definition clearer. Like sanctifying grace and the infused virtues with which they have many analogies, the gifts are the habits or good dispositions, existing as permanent states. This character of stability is evidenced by the text of *Isaias*: "the Spirit of the Lord shall *rest* on him . . ." and the Doctors of the Church have applied this text to the living members of Christ's

the spirit of knowledge and of godliness. He shall be filled with the spirit of the fear of the Lord." Instead of "fear" the Septuagint and the Vulgate put "piety," which has much the same meaning. Here we have the seven gifts: wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge and piety and the fear of God, which the Church calls the "sacrum septenarium." The presence of the gifts of the Holy Ghost in every just soul is a truth universally received in the Catholic Church. Even if no solemn definition has been given on this point, we have at least the ordinary teaching of the highest authority in the Church, which leaves no room for doubt. Every Catechism speaks of these gifts. On the feast of Pentecost we sing: "*Da tuis fidelibus in Te confidentibus sacrum septenarium*; Give to Thy faithful who trust in Thee Thy sevenfold gifts." In the hymn "Veni Creator," the third Person of the Blessed Trinity is called: "*Tu septiformis munere*; Thou whose gifts are sevenfold." Joret., *op. cit.*, 30, 31.

mystical body—who participate in the privileges of their Head. (Cf. S. Gregory the Great, Moral II, C. xxviii.) The gifts are not acts, but principles of action; still less are they movements, passing aids of grace (actual grace), intended to assist our faculties, but they are qualities, or forces given to the soul for the production of certain supernatural operations.

"The gifts of the Holy Ghost," writes R. P. Gardeil, "are not even interventions of the Holy Spirit in our life, but habitual dispositions placed in our soul to enable it to correspond easily to His inspirations. They are, as it were, capabilities of receiving impulses from God which the just soul keeps in reserve, after it has fulfilled the ordinary duties involved in the exercise of the infused virtues."[17]

With S. Thomas[18] we may define these gifts as habits or permanent qualities, essentially supernatural, which perfect us and dispose us to obey promptly the movements of the Holy Spirit. At the same time, let us notice that the word *obey*, used by S. Thomas, does not imply that the gifts are purely passive dispositions, a sort of spiritual anointing intended only to lubricate the mechanism of our faculties and to make them more readily movable by the action of the heavenly motive Power.

No, because just as the moral virtues subdue our appetitive powers to the dictates of reason and dis-

[17] Gardeil, *Les dons du Saint Esprit dans les Saints Dominicains*, p. 52. Cf. here P. Froget, *op. cit.*, p. 378 *sqq.*; P. Garrigou-Lagrange, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 338 *sqq.*; P. Joret, *op. cit.*, p. 49 *sqq.*

[18] *Summ. Theol.*, Ia, IIae, q. 68, a. 3.

pose them to a right action, so the gifts render us docile to the Holy Spirit's guidance, and aid us to do those good works which come under the Beatitudes. This is so well expressed by Mgr. Gay when he says: "They are at the same time supple and energetic, docile and strong, rendering the soul more passive under the hand of God, and also more active to serve Him and do His will."[19]

(2) *Distinction between the virtues and the gifts.* Some authors have thought that the gifts and the virtues are not really distinct from each other, but are merely two names for the same thing. But the great majority of the theologians hold, with S. Thomas, that there is a real distinction between the gifts and the virtues, a distinction founded on the diversity of principles and motives which influence men in the practice of good.

This is the doctrine of S. Thomas. There are in us two motives under the influence of which the acts which lead us to salvation are accomplished: one interior, which is reason; the other exterior, which is God. Two kinds of perfection are necessary in order to prepare man for this double influence: the one, the more humble, impels him to follow without resistance, in all his interior and exterior actions, the movement and direction of reason—this is the rôle of the virtues; the other, the higher, and consequently distinct from the first, renders him yielding and docile to the inspirations of the Holy Spirit. This is the function of the gifts.

From this twofold principle moving man in the

[19] Mgr. Gay, *De la Vie et des Vertus Chrétiennes*. First treatise. Cf. Joret, *op. cit.*, p. 40.

practice of what is right, we may legitimately conclude that there is a real distinction between the virtues and the gifts: different motive powers necessarily suppose, and, indeed, require different dispositions on the part of the person moved in order that he may be in a condition to receive impulses, some of which may be of a much higher degree than the others.[20]

But in what does this difference consist? What is it which exactly distinguishes the gifts from the virtues?

In reply, we must consider the difference which characterizes the action of these two sources of influence, and the different rule which serves to measure their actions.

(*a*) *By their mode of action.* The virtues, whether natural or supernatural, infused or acquired, dispose man to act in a reasonable and human way; the gifts, on the contrary, enable him to act after a supernatural, and in some sense, divine, manner. This is their proper function and constitutes their superiority over the virtues.[21]

We must now define exactly how we are to understand this human way of acting proper to the virtues, and the superhuman and divine mode which characterizes the gifts.

S. Thomas explains that our natural way of knowing consists in raising our minds up to the

[20] *Summ. Theol.*, Ia, IIae, q. 68, a. 1-8. For all this treatise on the gifts of the Holy Ghost. Cf. Froget, *op. cit.*, Part IV, Ch. VI.

[21] Cf. S. Thomas, sent. III, dist. 34, q. 1, a. 1: dist. 35, q. 2, a. 3. The gifts are superior to the infused moral virtues, but not to the theological virtues, whose perfection they increase by aiding their activity.

invisible world by means of visible things, by the likeness of creatures and by way of analogies, that is, by concepts which are imperfect and inadequate. Faith also, which is a virtue, has to fall back on these same imperfect ideas in order to make known to us supernatural truths, and although it penetrates into the depth of the Divinity and reveals to us divine mysteries, it does not change our natural manner of knowing; it is, and remains, essentially obscure.

It is here that the gifts of the Holy Spirit come in; for example, the gift of wisdom which belongs to the virtue of faith. Faith merely implies an assent to revealed truth; the gift of wisdom gives a certain perception of truth; it unfolds to us, so to speak, divine things, it raises us up above our natural manner of knowing, and without altogether lifting the veil, it gives us, even in this life, a foretaste of future revelations.[22]

We may recall here the case of many simple, unlearned souls who have been nevertheless wonderfully enlightened regarding divine truths. "Dost thou, my daughter, know who thou art and who I am?" our Lord asked S. Catherine of Siena. "If thou learn these two things thou shalt be happy. Thou art she who is not, and I am He who is." And Catherine learnt this, illuminated by the gift of wisdom which was in her. Some days before her death she declared, "that enlightened by a living faith, she had seen and perfectly understood in her mind, that everything that happened to her or to others came from God and was caused by the

[22] Cf. S. Thomas, *Summ. Theol.*, IIa, IIae, q. 8, a. 5 to 3; sent. III, dist. 34, q. 1, a. 1 and 2.

love He had for His creatures."[23] In the language of S. Catherine, this living faith means the gift of understanding.[23]

S. Thomas gives us several practical examples which enable us to understand more clearly the way in which the human way of acting proper to the virtues is distinguished from the supernatural action which marks the corresponding gifts.

Let us compare the virtue of prudence with the gift of counsel. When we have to make a grave decision, prudence, whether acquired or infused, must take counsel, and consider well all the circumstances and consequences of the course which one proposes to take; inquire as to the most suitable means for attaining the end, judge which are the best and how they are to be applied. That is the normal process. It sometimes happens, however, that on account of exceptional or particularly difficult circumstances, human prudence is at fault; in spite of care and careful deliberation it cannot always decide with certainty as to the best course.

On the other hand, if we have prayed with humility and confidence, often a sudden inspiration comes which makes all clear in a moment. Now to receive thus a light which ends our perplexity by giving us a kind of certainty what we should

[23] Rev. P. Gardeil in *op. cit.*, p. 149-150, quotes a beautiful passage of the *Dialogue*, where S. Catherine shows clearly this living faith, i.e., the gift of understanding. We may recall also the sublime writings of S. Theresa and of Blessed Angela of Foligno; the profound answers given by the lay brothers, companions of S. Francis, as related in the Fioretti. In our own time the holy Curé d'Ars, S. Thérèsa of the Child Jesus, Elizabeth of the Trinity, etc., were not profound theologians; and yet what clear light they have shed on divine truths. Cf. also *Life of Gemma Galgani* by R. P. Germain, C.P. (trans. by R. P. Félix de Jésus Crucifié, C.P., 1912), pp. 202, 222.

do, is evidently above the human mode. It is the result of the gift of counsel.[24]

We find the same proof if we compare the virtue of fortitude with the gift of the same name. The office of the virtue of fortitude is to strengthen the soul and enable it to surmount all the obstacles it encounters in the practice of good, in spite of danger and even death. Its natural mode of action consists in meeting difficulties according to the measure of human strength. To go beyond that and to undertake, on one's own initiative, a work surpassing one's strength, would not be a virtue, but rashness; just as to hold back through lack of courage would be a sign of weakness.

But let us suppose, in some particular case, that a man, urged by some higher instinct, relies on divine power for the measure of his actions rather than on his own strength, and engages in works manifestly exceeding his own capabilities, or counting on divine help faces danger which he of himself is powerless to surmount; to act thus is contrary to the human way of acting and is the effect of the gift of fortitude.[25]

From these examples we may deduce this *general rule*. In the acts which spring from the virtues, man acts according to his human state, that is, of his own accord in virtue of his personal initiative.

When, however, he acts under the impulse of the gifts, he acts no longer of himself, but, under an all-powerful interior impulse, to which nevertheless he lends himself willingly, he is moved to do such and such things by a suddenly inspired thought.

[24] Cf. S. Thomas, sent. III, dist. 34, q. 1, a. 2. *Summ. Theol.*, IIa, IIae, q. 52, a. 1.

[25] S. Thomas, sent. III, dist. 34, q. 1, a. 2.

Here, then, man is more passive than active, he is moved by the Spirit of God, but he is not, for all that, merely an instrument. His personal activity is present by his consent and free co-operation, because God moves every creature according to its nature. Because if the rôle of man under the action of the Holy Spirit was merely to suffer himself to be influenced and not to act of himself, he would no longer be a human soul, and God would never reduce him to a state contrary to nature.

However great the action performed through the impulse received from the working of the gifts, man remains free, and does not cease to act himself. As S. Augustine says, the Holy Spirit moves the children of God in order that they may act—not that they may remain purely passive and inert. (*De corrept. et gratia*, c. II. n. 4.) In other words, the gifts operate in us *without deliberation* on our part, but not without our consent.[26]

(*b*) The gifts also differ from the virtues *by the rule which serves as the measure* of their acts.

The rule of the acquired virtues is human reason, perfected by natural prudence; that of the infused virtues is reason enlightened by faith and guided by supernatural prudence. As to the gifts of the Holy Ghost which are given by God to guide us, their acts have no rule but the divine inspiration and the wisdom of the Spirit of Truth.

It is not unusual for a divine inspiration to impel a man to do works which overstep the limits of reason, even reason enlightened by faith. The lives

[26] Cf. Froget, *op. cit.*, p. 397; Joret, *op. cit.*, p. 5. S. Thomas, *Summ. Theol.*, Ia, IIae, q. 55, a. 4 to C. *S. Luke*, ii. 25 and iv. 1, relates two incidents in which we see this divine impulsion exercised.

of the Saints and the acts of the Martyrs offer many such examples: among others the Stylites, whose manner of life seemed a perpetual defiance of human prudence and even of nature itself. Such works are good, of a superior goodness; they are not rash, because God Himself counsels and sustains them; and they are justifiable because God, when He acts thus, is not bound to restrain Himself within the limits imposed by man's natural imperfection. They therefore fully satisfy the demands of prudence. Nevertheless, ordinary, or even Christian prudence, would never authorize such things. It is in these works, above all, that the Holy Spirit's gifts come into play.[27]

For this reason, some theologians say that the gifts dispose us to higher acts, more excellent than those which spring from the virtues; and S. Thomas declares that this opinion seems to be most conformable to the truth.[28]

It must not, however, be thought that the gifts have an object distinct from the virtues, or that they are only exercised in heroic deeds. From this it would follow that the gifts only belonged to great souls, to Saints, while the great multitude of Christians, who live in a state of grace but without doing anything extraordinary, would have no part in them.

Now all the doctors and masters of the spiritual life teach unanimously that the gifts of the Holy Ghost are the common property of all the just, and S. Thomas declares them necessary to salvation. It must be admitted, therefore, that, if heroic actions

[27] Cf. *Ami du Clergé*, 1892, p. 391.

[28] S. Thomas, *Summ. Theol.*, Ia, IIae, q. 68, a. 1; sent. III, dist. 34, q. 1, a. 1.

and eminent works of perfect sanctity constitute the principal domain of the gifts, these ought not to be, and cannot be, considered as their normal object and the limit of their sphere of influence. The domain of the gifts is not entirely separated from that of the virtues; and special works surpassing in perfection the material objects of the virtues, should not be reserved to the gifts.

On the contrary, any one of the gifts might, at a given moment, be called on to exercise its higher mode of action upon any one of the virtues. The field of action of the gifts is as far-reaching as that of the virtues. But if they both have the same subject matter they are nevertheless differentiated, as we have already seen, by their mode of acting and by the rule which measures their acts.[29]

(3) *Respective rôles of the virtues and the gifts in the economy of the spiritual life.* All admit in a general way, says S. Thomas, that this rôle consists, for the virtues, in training our appetitive powers to obey reason promptly, and, for the gifts, in disposing the just to obey with docility the inspirations of the Holy Spirit.[30]

But opinions differ when it is a question of interpreting more precisely the doctrine of the Master. Without going into details, let us simply say that, in one opinion, every supernatural act, even the most simple, requires the exercise of the virtues *and* the gifts; or in other words, that the exercise of the gifts extends to *all* the acts of our supernatural life.[31]

[29] S. Thomas, *Summ. Theol.*, Ia, IIae, q. 68, a. 2 in co. and to first, a. 4.

[30] S. Thomas, *Summ. Theol.*, Ia, IIae, q. 68, a. 3.

[31] *Ami du Clergé*, September 1, 1898, p. 774; December 29, 1898, p. 1,164 and 1,166.

Père Froget has shown that this interpretation is not in accordance with the mind of S. Thomas.[32] For him, the virtues, whose office it is to prepare the soul to follow without resistance the movements and direction of reason, also dispose it, by way of consequence, to follow the ordinary and common impulse given by God to every creature desirous of making use of the principle of activity within them. "By the very fact that man is well disposed with regard to his own reason," says S. Thomas, "so is he also with regard to God."[33]

The gifts, then, have as their special function to prepare the soul possessing them to receive, in a supernatural way, not all divine impulsions, but those specially known as *inspirations* or *instincts* of the Holy Spirit; and to perform acts which are beyond the ordinary, acts which are perhaps quite ordinary in themselves, but beyond the ordinary in their manner of production and by the rule which measures them.

Therefore God moves us in a different way by the virtues and by the gifts; by the virtues He moves us in a manner conformable to our nature; by the gifts, in a higher way. The intervention of these latter is not used for doing good in a merely human way, in conformity with the ordinary rules of procedure in nature and grace; for these the virtues suffice, the acquired virtues for good acts of the natural order; the infused or Christian virtues for those of a higher order. The gifts become necessary and come into play only in those special cases above mentioned, when a higher standard of action than usual is required, to practise heroic virtue or in

[32] *Op. cit.*, p. 40 *sqq.*
[33] *Summ. Theol.*, Ia, IIae, q. 34, a. 9 ad. 2um.

specially difficult circumstances; or again where it is a question of corresponding freely but with docility to certain extraordinary inspirations which come directly from God.[34] But all this will be better understood when we have shown the necessity of the gifts.

(*b*) *Necessity of the gifts of the Holy Spirit.*

We have already remarked that S. Thomas considers these are necessary for salvation.[35] After what we have already said regarding their special office in the spiritual economy, this, at first sight, seems contradictory. How indeed can they be necessary if their proper end is to render us docile to divine inspirations where the motive of reason is insufficient?

The contradiction, however, is only apparent; when we admit that God has called man to a supernatural life and consider the exigencies and consequences of this elevation, the necessity of the gifts is seen at once.

If man was intended for a purely natural end, he could, by the ordinary help of Providence and his own resources, advance towards the goal marked out for him. But reason, even if perfected by faith and the other theological virtues, is powerless to lead us to the supernatural end appointed by God. Why? Because here below, in our state of wayfarers, we have the theological virtues only imperfectly—we know and love God only imperfectly —and the moral virtues in a degree insufficient to

[34] Cf. S. Thomas, *Summ. Theol.*, Ia, IIae, q. 68, a. 1; a. 2; a. 8; sent. III, dist. 34, q. 1, a. 1.
[35] *Summ. Theol.*, Ia, IIae, q. 68, a. 2.

enable us to resist at all times the attacks of the enemies of our salvation.[36]

Reason being an insufficient guide, we need one more enlightened. We need the assistance of a stronger motive power, and consequently the divine gifts, which have, for their proper end, to render us supple and docile to the higher inspirations. Wherever the inspiration of reason is not enough, the inspiration of the Holy Ghost is necessary, and also the gifts.[37]

It is easily understood that in the supernatural order the inspiration of the Holy Ghost is necessary. "He who possesses only an imperfect source of activity," says S. Thomas, "has not sufficient power to act of himself; he needs an exterior aid, a direction, and a special impulse." He brings as an example a student of medicine: a doctor who has learnt his art well, can operate by himself without need of direction; but the student not yet fully instructed would not venture, if he were prudent, to undertake alone, without the assistance of his master, a delicate operation entailing grave consequences.[38]

That is exactly our actual condition with regard to our supernatural end. We only possess virtues imperfectly, especially the theological virtues, which are the principles of supernatural action; we cannot therefore attain to eternal salvation without a special help, without the impulse or particular assistance of the Holy Ghost, that is, by the gifts which dispose us to receive them.[39]

[36] Cf. Joret, *op. cit.*, P. Saint Jure, *L'Homme Spirituel*, Part I, Ch. III, section 6, Vol. I, p. 287, edition Pélagaud, 1856.

[37] S. Thomas, *Summ. Theol.*, Ia, IIae, q. 68, a. 2.

[38] *Ibid.*

[39] *Ibid.*

In this sense, they are necessary as habitual dispositions, as the sails are necessary in order that the ship may be pliant before the wind.

We must not, on this account, conclude that the Christian is always incapable of doing a supernatural act without the invention of the gifts. If he has lost these gifts by mortal sin, he can, by the aid of ordinary actual grace, make a supernatural act of faith and other saving acts. Very often, also, the just man acts in a supernatural way without any special inspiration of the Holy Ghost. But " it is not in the power of reason, even enlightened by faith and infused prudence, to know all that it is necessary to know to keep in the right path. He who alone is omniscient and all-powerful can help us in our ignorance, slowness of mind, spiritual indolence, hardness of heart and other miseries of our nature. It is for the very purpose of delivering us from these faults that we receive the gifts which render us docile to divine inspirations."[40]

We see from this the sense in which we are to take those words of S. Thomas in which he teaches this necessity of the gifts: " Man is not sufficiently perfected by the theological and moral virtues to attain his ultimate supernatural end, and has *always* need of being moved by the higher inspiration of the Holy Spirit."[41]

Always: not that man has need of being moved by a direct inspiration of the Holy Ghost to every good work, but that he has always need of being inspired by the interior Master, of being guided and aided by special light from above. He will therefore have need of the gifts also, to render him docile

[40] S. Thomas, *Summ. Theol.*, Ia, IIae, q. 68, a. 2 to 3.
[41] *Ibid.* to. 2.

to this impulsion, not continuously but from time to time; more or less often according to the difficulties which present themselves, the greatness of the work to be accomplished, the degrees of perfection to which each one is called, and also according to the good pleasure of God, who is Master of his gifts and distributes them according to His will.

In other words, if the gifts of the Holy Spirit are not necessary for each and every supernatural act, nevertheless there is no time of life, no state or human condition which can do without them and their divine influence.

(*c*) *Excellence of the gifts of the Holy Spirit.*

The examination of their office in our spiritual life has already shown this excellence. It will not, however, be out of place to insist upon this excellence, if only to show the worth of the practical conclusions that we are about to draw.

The gifts of the Holy Spirit are excellent both in themselves and in regard to the virtues.

(1) *In themselves.* Our perfection is in proportion to our union with and docility to the Holy Spirit, who is the direct source of all sanctity: now it is by the gifts that this union is effected and whereby the soul obeys with docility the direction of the Spirit of God. "The gifts of the Holy Spirit," says S. Thomas, "dispose all the faculties of the soul to submit themselves to the divine impulse."[42] Also, from the midst of the soul in which He rules as Master and living Guide, He enlightens the mind to see what is to be done, He

[42] *Summ. Theol.*, Ia, IIae. q. 68, a. 8.

inflames the heart and inclines the will to accomplish a desirable good. P. Lallemant points out some of the happy effects of this action of the gifts. "It is by them," he says, "that the Saints succeed in freeing themselves from the slavery of creatures, since the abundant effusion of these heavenly gifts effaces from the mind the remembrance and idea of earthly things and banishes all affection for and desire of them from the heart, in such wise that the Saints think of these only as they will and as much as they will. They no longer feel the importunity of distractions, or the disquiet and hurry which troubled them formerly, and all their powers being perfectly regulated, they rejoice in a sovereign peace and in the liberty of the children of God."[43]

The gifts procure and guarantee this peace and liberty for the soul by leading it gradually to the perfect practice of virtue, inciting it to heroic acts, or, at least, rendering it heroic by the tireless perseverance of its efforts. At the same time they put the soul in the right dispositions for being elevated, when God wills, to infused contemplation, the pliancy and docility they produce being the requisite condition for the mystic state, the short road to the highest perfection.

(2) *With regard to the virtues.* "The virtues are divided into three classes: theological, intellectual, and moral. The theological virtues unite the human soul to God; the intellectual virtues perfect the reason; and the moral virtues perfect the appetitive faculties in order to make them obedient to reason."[44]

Let us compare these three kinds of virtue.

[43] *Spiritual Doctrine, Principle* IV, Ch. III, a. 2, 4.
[44] S. Thomas, Ia, IIae, q. 68, a. 8.

(*a*) The gifts are not superior to the theological virtues, least of all to charity, the first and most perfect of all supernatural goods and source whence the gifts flow. The theological virtues, indeed, have direct reference to God and unite us immediately to Him, above all charity, and it is in this union that our perfection and our holiness consist.

One may further say that the gifts perfect the theological virtues in their *exercise*. They enliven our faith, animate our hope, enflame our love, and give us a taste for God and for divine things. They are the means which are related to the theological virtues as to their end; but they add to their perfection. "The gifts are in the second rank, because they take their orders from the theological virtues and serve them, to enable these to act excellently."[45]

(*b*) But the gifts have a higher perfection than the moral and intellectual virtues. "If we cannot compare the gifts with the moral and intellectual virtues," writes S. Thomas, "the gifts are superior to the virtues. The gifts indeed perfect the faculties of the soul with regard to the action of the Holy Spirit, who is the principle of movement; while the other virtues perfect, either reason itself, or the other faculties moved by reason. Now it is clear that the thing moved must be disposed by a greater perfection to receive motion from a superior motive power. Therefore the gifts are superior to the virtues."[46]

The gifts, being more perfect than the moral

[45] P. Saint Jure, *L'Homme Spirituel*, Part I. Ch. III, sect. xvi, t. 1, p. 275, edit. Pélagaud, 1856.
[46] *Summ. Theol.*, Ia, IIae, q. 68, a. 8, in co.

virtues, will lead these to a higher plane, where, being merged with charity, they unite us to God. "The gifts," writes P. Froget, "are above all the precious auxiliaries of the moral virtues, whose acts they perfect, even supplying, if necessary, what is beyond their power."[47] Thus prudence would often fail and err without the gift of counsel; piety holds the scale of justice in perfect balance, fearing to be either ungrateful to superiors or too severe on inferiors. Strength or fortitude may become feeble and yield to the enemy, unless seconded by the gift and assisted in the combat. And the gift of fear is necessary to the virtue of temperance to repress the violent assaults of concupiscence and to hold us in check in the heat of passion.

The effects of the gifts of the Holy Ghost, then, consist in a more energetic action and more heroic efforts in the practice of what is good. By them, the soul, already in possession of ordinary sanctity and rendered capable, by the infused virtues, of accomplishing the ordinary works of the Christian life, is raised up to the greatest heights of perfection. Hence the reason of the words of S. Thomas: "The gifts perfect the virtues by raising them above the human mode." The masters of the spiritual life have compared them to the wings of a bird or to the sails of a ship. The bird can fly more quickly than it can walk; and, while the boat, furnished only with oars, advances but slowly and with difficulty, the one whose sails are filled with wind, or which is driven by steam, moves rapidly over the waves.[48] This shows how important it is for us to cultivate the gifts.

[47] *Op. cit.*, p. 421.
[48] P. Froget, *op. cit.*, pp. 421-422.

(d) Cultivation of the gifts of the Holy Ghost.

Like all aids of the supernatural life, the gifts flow from "Him from whom all perfect gifts come." They are given to us together with justification at the same time as the infused virtues, and these together form the cortège of sanctifying grace from which they are inseparable. The child receives them in baptism, but only as simple supernatural dispositions and faculties; they exist, but remain quiescent so long as the soul, not yet having the use of its faculties, is a stranger to the moral life. Though present in the soul they do not act; they are in a state of minority.[49]

With age, reason dawns. The heart is drawn towards God, the moral life awakens, and together with it, under the influence of actual grace, the harmonious development of all our supernatural faculties begins, including the gifts of the Holy Spirit. One cannot see, indeed, how they escape the law of progress, which is the law of our spiritual life itself. Without admitting their intervention in all our good works, we recognize their *latent* influence in most of them; they exercise themselves fully in our lives more or less often, in spite of circumstances and difficulties. For all these reasons the gifts should increase according to the rule common to all spiritual growth; they must grow as habits and dispositions together with charity and sanctifying grace, until they arrive at their complete and normal development.

In a soul purified and softened by the persevering practice of the moral virtues, they make their action

[49] P. Saint Jure, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 291.

more and more felt; frequently they join their energies, without the soul always being conscious of it, to those of the virtues to impel it to perform supernatural acts.

It is true they do not fully, freely and continuously act until the soul, wholly subdued to the leading of the Holy Spirit, shall have been led by Him into the mystical life, characterized as infused contemplation. But there are occasions when by "operating"[50] grace the Holy Spirit produces in the soul, in a *transitory* manner, transports of fervour and unaccustomed acts of piety which are as a passing contemplation. Our personal experience bears witness to this. There are few deeply Christian and generous souls who have not experienced from time to time these sudden workings of grace, in which they have only to receive and follow the divine inspiration. How many young men and girls have thus seen, in a ray of divine light, the clear indication of the will of God in their regard. At other times it is a new and irresistible strength which enters into and penetrates the will, bringing with it the necessary energy to resist temptation and to triumph over obstacles which, till then, had held the soul back. Here is the intervention of the Holy Spirit. He has made His gifts felt, either directly in the intimacy of the soul, or, more often, by the occasion or intervention of exterior circumstances. Anthony hearing read in the Mass the words of the Gospel: "Go, sell all that thou hast . . . and come and follow Me," felt himself moved by the Spirit of God to leave all and flee into

[50] Cf. Part II, Ch. I, § 2, *La Grace Actuelle*. On the identification of the instinct of the gifts and operating grace. Cf. Joret, *op. cit.*, p. 46, n. 3.

solitude; Ignatius of Loyola, reading the life of the Saints, said to himself: "Why cannot I do what has been done by feeble girls and women?" It seems, at such times, as if the grace of God was leading gently but strongly to higher paths yet unknown. But these are only the passing interventions of the Holy Spirit; in order that His gifts may act habitually in the soul and in our life, it is necessary to cultivate them, to assist their action by preparing the ground for them.

Means of Cultivating the Gifts of the Holy Spirit

"You desire to know how to merit an increase of the gifts and to possess them in a high degree? I answer that there are three means; the first is to render oneself more worthy by withdrawing from love of the world and applying our minds to spiritual things; . . . the second is to ask to pray; . . . the third is to unite oneself closely to our Lord Jesus Christ."[51]

For the sake of clearness, and to study in due order the means usually pointed out by spiritual authors, we will divide them into negative and positive means.

(1) *Negative means which remove obstacles to the action of the Holy Spirit. The practice of the moral virtues.* S. Thomas says: "The moral and intellectual virtues come before the gifts in order of time and disposition, because it is by behaving rightly according to his own reason that man is prepared to behave rightly before God."[52]

[51] P. Saint Jure, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 291.
[52] *Summ. Theol.*, Ia, IIae, q. 68, a. 8 to 2.

(*a*) Therefore the first necessary step in the cultivation of the gifts is the practice of the moral virtues. The end of the gifts is to render us more docile to the direction of the Holy Ghost, and since our passions and vices constitute the chief obstacle to this docility, it is necessary to conquer and extirpate them first, and this is the work proper to the moral virtues. Thence the wise and just counsel of Cajetan: "Let spiritual directors note this well and take care that their disciples exercise themselves first in the active life (that is, the practice of virtues) before suggesting to them the heights of contemplation. The passions must be conquered by habits of sweetness, patience, liberality and humility before the soul, at last rendered tranquil, can raise itself to contemplation. For want of this ascetic training, many who, instead of walking, go leaping along the way of God, find themselves, after having consecrated a great part of their life to contemplation, still devoid of virtue, impatient, proud and ill-tempered, when they are put to the least proof. Such souls have lived neither the active nor contemplative life, nor of both united, but they have built on the sand."[53]

It is impossible indeed to perceive, to gather up and follow with docility the inspirations of grace when the soul is agitated by the tempest of passion or troubled with evil desires. "The reason why we are so little enlightened by the Holy Spirit and so little directed by His gifts," writes P. Lallemant, "is that our soul is very sensual and full of innumerable thoughts, desires and earthly affections which extinguish the Holy Spirit in us."[54]

[53] *Comment.* in IIam, IIae, q. 182, a. 1., 87.
[54] *Doctrine Spirituelle, Principle* IV, Ch. III, a. 3, § 3.

Before being led to divine things, we must first have purified our soul by the practice of moral virtues and followed the rules of Christian prudence; before obeying the impulse of grace and the inspirations of the Holy Spirit, it is necessary first to be exercised in the observance of the Commandments and to have subdued pride, the source of all disobedience.

(*b*) *The combat against the spirit of the world.* "Worldly souls—hearts attached to things of earth are incapable of these precious gifts—of the clear light and the good works they produce in the soul."[55] S. Paul has already taught the same. He wrote to the Corinthians (1 *Ep.* ii. 12-14): "We have received not the spirit of this world, but the Spirit that is of God: that we may know the things which are given us of God. . . . But the sensual man perceiveth not things that are of the Spirit of God: for it is foolishness to him and he cannot understand, because it is spiritually examined."

There is complete opposition between the spirit of the world and the Spirit of God; the latter can only be attained by putting off the former, that is in fighting against it. The best means of struggling victoriously against the spirit of the world is to draw inspiration from the Spirit of God at the source, from the Gospel, which should be read and re-read, so that its maxims may so penetrate us that our conduct may be conformed to it as far as possible. We shall then be ready to be led by the impulse of the Holy Spirit.

(2) *Positive and direct means*, which place the soul under the influence of the Holy Spirit. This influence is deep and intimate, so that all that favours

[55] S. Bonaventure, *Lib. de Sept Donis*, Ch. IV.

the interior life helps to develop the action of the Holy Spirit. Also among the positive means, we may mention:

(*a*) Above all, interior recollection or the habit of thinking often of God, living not only near us, but in us.

This recollection presupposes the subjection of the senses, both exterior and interior, especially the memory and the imagination. It is acquired by repeated acts of the presence of God. Gradually the soul arrives at a state in which this sacred presence is never wholly lost, even amidst the most absorbing occupations. The soul retires often into itself in that hidden cell, the secret of which our Saviour revealed to S. Catherine of Siena; there it finds the Holy Spirit and listens to His voice. (*Ps.* lxxxiv. 9.) Here also is fulfilled the words of the *Imitation*: "Happy the soul who hears the Saviour speaking to him interiorly and who receives the words of consolation from His mouth. Happy the ears which are always attentive to the divine whisper and deaf to the noises of the world. Happy the eyes which are closed to exterior things and contemplate only those which are interior."[56]

Then the Holy Spirit speaks to the heart, and His words bring light, strength and consolation.

(*b*) Interior recollection disposes the soul to hear the voice of the Holy Spirit. We *must listen* to this voice; and though it often asks sacrifices, we must accustom ourselves to *follow promptly* and generously the least inspirations of the Divine Spirit, speaking in a clear and certain way. (*John* viii. 29.) P. Lallemant writes: "We should receive

[56] *Imitation of Jesus Christ*, Book III, Ch. I.

every inspiration as a word from God, proceeding from His wisdom, His mercy and His infinite goodness, and which can work wonders in us if we put no obstacles in its way."[57]

If we resist Him, we grieve Him, and S. Paul bids us avoid grieving the Holy Spirit (*Eph.* iv. 30); and still more forbids us to extinguish Him (1 *Thess.* v. 19). If we resist Him we expose ourselves to the danger of losing His inspirations, or at least of hearing them more rarely.

Thence the counsel of Holy Scripture: "To-day, if you will hear his voice, harden not your hearts" (*Ps.* xciv. 8; *Heb.* iii. 7, 8). "The Holy Spirit," to quote P. Lallemant again, "waits till they (the negligent and dissipated) enter into themselves, and seeing within the works of grace and those of nature, they dispose themselves to follow His guidance; but if they abuse the opportunities and favours He offers, He leaves them at last to themselves and in that state of ignorance of their own interior which is very dangerous to their salvation."[58]

All the progress of a soul in the way of perfection and sanctity depends on docility to the Holy Spirit. One may say with truth that there are very few persons who walk continuously in the way of God. Many stray frequently and the Holy Spirit recalls them by His inspirations: but as they are indocile, full of self, attached to their own views, puffed up with their own wisdom, they do not allow themselves to be easily led; they enter but rarely into the way of God's designs, nor do they remain there long,

[57] Lallemant, *Spiritual Doctrine, Principle* IV, Ch. II, a. 3, § 1.
[58] *Ibid.*, a. 2, § 1.

returning to their own ways and ideas, which cause them to be continually changing. Thus they make but little advance, and death surprises them when they have made only twenty steps where they might have made ten thousand if they had not given up the Holy Spirit's guidance. "Truly interior persons, on the other hand, who guide themselves by the light of the Spirit of God, to which they are disposed by purity of heart, and which they follow with perfect submission, walk with giant steps, or rather fly in the way of grace."[59]

(*c*) To interior recollection and docility must be added invocations full of confidence, which incline the Holy Spirit to our aid. "As the gifts are gifts of the Holy Spirit," says P. Saint Jure, "it is reasonable and necessary that they should be asked for from Him; and as they are very great gifts we should ask for them very earnestly with all the ardour possible."[60]

We must then invoke the Holy Spirit, but in union with the Word of God, who has promised to send us His Spirit; in union also with the Blessed Virgin, who is the Spouse and most perfect temple of the Holy Spirit, even as did the Apostles who, in the Cenacle, prayed in union with Mary.[61]

[59] Lallement, *Spiritual Doctrine, Principle* IV, Ch. III, a. 2, § 1.

[60] P. Saint Jure, *L'Homme Spirituel*, Part I, Ch. III, sect. xvi, Vol. I, pp. 292-293.

[61] Cf. Tanquerey, *Précis de Théologie Ascétique et Mystique*, p. 821 and Saint Jure, *op. cit.*, pp. 293-295. In Tanquerey are found the chief prayers to the Holy Spirit that may be profitably used by a devout soul.

CHAPTER V

AIDS TO THE SPIRITUAL LIFE

Principal aids: direction occupies a place apart. I. Nature of direction: rôle of the director. II. Importance of direction: its usefulness or necessity. Qualifications for direction in the person directed: respect, confidence, docility and constancy.

Direction

After having studied, in the preceding chapters, the action on our spiritual life of those whom we have called workers and who act in us, it remains, in order to complete this general introduction, to speak of the auxiliaries or aids placed at our disposal from without, helps that assist the growth of that life of which grace is the germ, the point of departure, and the base.

These are the *exterior means*, that is to say the resources which we may make use of outside ourselves, to help us to walk and advance in the hard road of perfection.

These resources are many—but in the first rank stands *spiritual direction*. Holy Scripture tells us that, before starting for Rages, the young Tobias sought out a guide for the journey (*Tob.* v. 4, 5); so should the soul desirous of reaching sanctity. Then, the guide chosen, it behoves the soul to

regulate her whole life by his counsels, particularly her exercises of piety, her austerities and her intercourse with others.

Books are means of influence of another sort, and may be either a great help to perfection, or a great peril. But we must never forget that the only really efficacious virtue to raise up a soul and to sustain its efforts, comes from divine grace, of which the Sacraments, and chiefly Penance and the Eucharist, are the external channels.

We may, then, sum up the chief external means or helps to perfection as follows: direction, a rule of life, practices of piety, austerities, intercourse with others, reading, and the Sacraments. The study of most of these means belongs to the purgative way and the exercises of the ascetical life. Therefore we shall only treat, and that very briefly, of direction, the influence of which extends to all the spiritual life and rules the first steps therein, but which governs the soul most strictly perhaps in its supreme efforts to reach the heights of sanctity.

Spiritual Direction

Fr. Faber says that the question of direction is one of the most disputed subjects in the spiritual life. "There is no point on which there is such a general consensus of opinion—up to a certain point; but once this is passed, there is great divergence of opinion on all sides."

We would here explain those points on which there exists or can exist a general agreement.

I. Nature of Direction

The direction of which we are speaking is that which belongs to the sacerdotal office and is given by a priest. This alone unites all the characteristics of true direction; it proceeds from the divine authority given by the Sacraments, and has for guarantee the spiritual fraternity which the priesthood confers, the supernatural science which it supposes and requires, and the grace of office which God gives liberally to His ministers. This direction may be defined, in the language of asceticism, or in the most refined sense of the word, the spiritual guidance of souls in the way of virtue and perfection.

We say " virtue and perfection " in order to mark, at once, the unity and diversity of direction. Because there are three classes of travellers on this road: those whom spiritual writers call beginners, those who are progressing, and the perfect. All need to be guided; but evidently the guidance of a soul struggling in the painful labour of flight from and expiation of sin, differs from the guidance of another who has already attained and is striving to attain the higher regions of the perfect life. For the first, it is sufficient to apply judiciously the general rules of psychology and morality, to lead the soul to the accomplishment of the ordinary duties of the Christian life and to turn its efforts discreetly towards a better life; with regard to the latter, we find ourselves in the presence of a soul called to a state of high perfection, sometimes overwhelmed by God with extraordinary graces, and requiring consequently a direction which supposes in him who

gives it, great gifts of knowledge and of prudence and unusual sanctity.

To mark out this difference, some authors have discerned a threefold direction—popular, ordinary, and extraordinary, corresponding to the needs of these three classes of souls: those who struggle against sin and its approaches, those who in the exercise of piety advance towards a higher degree of virtue, and those who have already reached the summit of the mystical life.[1]

Whether it follows this division and terminology, and in whatever degree it is required, direction has certain characteristic marks on which it is necessary to dwell.

First, in order to understand its rôle, and especially that of the director, we must remember that God is the Sovereign Master who rules all hearts. Those whom He wills to associate with Himself in this work of the direction of souls, can only be His intermediaries and instruments. The director is not an autocrat, direction is not a work of authority without control, it must be only a "substitute of God." "We are ambassadors for Christ, God, as it were, exhorting by us," wrote S. Paul to the Corinthians (*2 Ep.*, v. 20). "It is necessary that a soul should feel its master—its human master," remarks M. l'Abbé Bremond; "except on this condition it will not remain humble, docile, or altogether sure; but the director must himself obey Him whom he represents, and he must loosen or tighten the reins according to the pleasure of the Spirit who breathes where He will."[2]

Speaking, then, in the name and under the inspira-

[1] Cf. *L'Ami du Clergé*, February 10, 1921, p. 65.
[2] *S. Jane de Chantal*, p. 54.

tion of God, the director must respect the personality of him to whom he speaks; he directs, but he does not order. He does not impose his personal views on the moral organism of another: the soul is called on to suffice for itself and to act, not as a machine worked from without, but as a living being, acting under the impulse of an interior principle, coming forth to develop and perfect itself according to the exigencies of its particular vocation.

Thus it seems that the rôle of a director—therefore of direction—is expressed in these three words; he is at one and the same time an *initiator*, a *help*, and a *guide*.[3]

(*a*) An *initiator*, not a creator. God alone is Creator in the order of grace as in nature. Instead of finding himself in face of a work just springing from nothing, the director is in the presence of souls supernaturally organized, with their own characters and dispositions, which cannot be altered essentially, except at the risk of compromising the whole work of direction and the efforts of those who accept it with submission.

Nor is it the work of an *innovator*; the director needs not to discover or explain new principles or more modern theories of direction, the Church alone takes the initiative in such matters. The director reveals the moral life, both ascetical and moral, and spiritual knowledge to souls who are either ignorant of them, or who require to know them more fully, also the resources placed at their disposal by grace, resources which remain dormant while awaiting the activity which makes use of them and renders them fruitful.

[3] Cf. R. P. Gerest, O.P., *Mémorial de la Vie Spirituelle*, p. 258.

(*b*) *He is an aid* in the twofold work which is imposed on the soul in its way towards perfection: knowledge of self and correspondence with divine grace. As aid, then, the director helps the soul to know herself better, that is, to know exactly what she is and what she has to give, how she can best utilize the riches she possesses, and how to order them so as to make the best use of them in the service of God. He comes especially to the assistance of the soul in her efforts to correspond with the attractions of grace. He sustains her first faltering steps, urges on her the need of unfailing generosity in the hard purifications of the ascetical life; he excites her to self-renunciation, to the correction of her faults, to the practice of virtue; he encourages her in time of weariness, raises her up after falls, and inspires her with new energy to start afresh and go on to the end.

(*c*) *He is a guide.* He assists the soul by his experience, his keener insight regarding the obstacles which will meet her in the way. This way is a winding one on earth, as Holy Scripture says, a dark and slippery one (*Ps.* xxxiv. 6), "very dangerous," as Bossuet remarks; "being slippery and dark, peril seems almost inevitable. . . . It is thus man finds himself: his soul in darkness, his understanding in profound ignorance, his will turned towards evil from his birth, his mood changing continually—nearly causing him to fall at every step; and if all that is not enough, the devil ever pressing his temptations."[4] One can well understand, therefore, of how great use are the counsels and aid of a competent guide. This guide is the director, who, enlightened by theological study, and above all by

[4] *Letter to Sr. Cornuau,* letter CXLIX.

the lights he receives from God in prayer, leads the soul, with prudence and certainty, through the obstacles which present themselves all along her way to God.

Such is the true idea of direction. Thus regarded, it is very far from being as imagined by enemies. Its action is real, but it does not suppress that of God, nor that of the soul. The director is not the "inflexible ruler" feared by Michelet.[5] Neither does he supplant by his own intelligence and will those of the soul he directs. His part does not consist in making him forget "the noble fatigue of living."[6] On the contrary, he stands beside to help to accept this fatigue and to sanctify it in conquering.

II. Importance of Direction: Usefulness or Necessity?

"Of all the doctrines of the Catholic Church," writes Fr. Faber, "none has been so often attacked as the office of spiritual director, not only by heretics outside the Church, but in her bosom itself, by ignorant or lukewarm Catholics. We may say on this subject, as with regard to the cultus of the Blessed Virgin, that such fury on the part of the devil is the measure of the hate and fear with which it inspires him."[7]

There is a good argument in favour of direction. But the question is important and we must define it clearly.

[5] *Le Prêtre et les Jesuites*, p. 200.
[6] Caro, *Nouvelles Études Morales sur le Temps Présent*, p. 166 *sqq*.
[7] *Op. cit.*, Ch. XVIII.

(1) Let us say, first, that *ascetical spiritual direction* in the ordinary sense is not *absolutely necessary* for the sanctification of souls. That is the general rule.

All that is necessary is continual care in fulfilling the indispensable conditions of salvation: the avoidance of evil and the practice of good, knowledge of the precepts of God and of the Church, reception of the Sacraments, etc. The rest is indeed a matter of "good will," of subjective correspondence with grace; and under this head, everyone has the means and possibility of ordering his life in such way as God asks, in order to be saved. Counsellors may be lacking, the grace of God is never lacking, or the means of working out our salvation.

Besides, many even among those raised to the altars of the Church have reached a high degree of perfection with no director but the Holy Ghost, and their only means of sanctification their faithful correspondence with grace.

There are cases, it is true, sufficiently numerous in certain places and in particular states of life, where direction is necessary in order to advance in virtue. But apart from these cases, given the historic experience of facts and the doctrine of the sovereign efficacy of grace for each individual, when we speak of the normal Christian life, even the most perfect, we may say that it does not, in itself, regularly require the assistance of spiritual direction from without.[9]

If direction is not always absolutely necessary, it is at least always *useful, even very useful,* if made

[9] Cf. *Ami du Clergé,* 1921, p. 424; 1923, pp. 131-133; Ribet, *L'Ascét. Chrét.,* Ch. XXXIV, 4, p. 355.

under the right conditions. We could bring as witness the authority of many Saints, and one might say of all spiritual writers, because they proclaim unanimously the moral necessity of direction.[10] In their eyes one thing is certain: to progress in the spiritual life, a guide, a director is necessary. Commenting on the words of Holy Scriptures—"*Woe to him who is alone*"—S. John of the Cross writes: "The Holy Spirit here proclaims the necessity that the soul should have a master. . . . The devil easily prevails over those who walk alone, and have no will but their own to guide them in the things of God . . . two together can better resist the evil one and see and act according to truth."[11]

Such is the traditional doctrine, unanimously professed by all those who, in the course of ages, have shone by their knowledge and sanctity; and those who reject it can certainly not do so without rashness and peril.[12]

This is the language of reason enlightened by faith and founded on experience. Direction, in the ascetical life, has for its aim, first to aid the soul in the accomplishment of its duty and then in its efforts towards a better and more perfect life; in other words, to help it to grow in virtue—attain to holiness. In the language of the ancient mystics, spiritual progress is a long and painful ascension along a road, bordered with deep ditches and precipices and crossed by other roads, which, though similar, do not lead in the same direction.

[10] A rough list of authors and texts will be found in the most ascetical treatises. Cf. for example, Ribet, pp. 355-359.

[11] *Maximes et Avis Spirituels*, Nos. 228, 288, Vol. II. Hoornaert's translation—Montée du Carmel.

[12] Leo XIII, *Lettre "Testem Benevolentiæ," sur "l'Americanism,"* January 22, 1899.

It would be great imprudence to follow this road without an experienced guide; "so much the more," remarks P. Louis Dupont, "because it is beset with enemies, visible and invisible, both cruel and cunning, ever seeking to rob the wayfarers of their treasures of grace and virtue."[13] This means, to speak quite plainly, that the interior or spiritual life is full of illusions and perils, and in the midst of these we cannot be sufficiently clear-sighted of ourselves. We cannot be, as S. Francis of Sales says, impartial judges in our own cause, and that because of a certain complacency, "so secret and imperceptible that unless one has very good sight it is not discovered, and those who have it do not know it themselves unless it is shown to them."[14] We must therefore be convinced, with S. Francis of Sales, of the necessity of a spiritual physician to make an impartial diagnosis of our state of soul and to prescribe the most efficacious remedies. "How, indeed, can we manage ourselves with regard to the soul, if we are not able to do so with regard to our bodies? Do we not know that doctors, when they are ill, call in other doctors to prescribe for them?"[15]

Let us also add that the interior life is a divine art, a true and difficult science. All careers and professions yet invented by man's genius, among visible and tangible things, require a master, if they are to be well learnt. Why, then, does this invisible and hidden discipline, the formation of the soul, only perceptible to the pure heart, not need also a guide

[13] *Le Guide Spirituel,* treatise IV, Ch. II, 1.
[14] *Introd. to the Devout Life,* part III, Ch. XXVIII.
[15] *Sermons recueillis, Pour la Fête de N. D. des Neiges,* t. IX, p. 95.

and master, when, if error should creep in, it might mean eternal death and the loss of a soul?[16]

This science of the spiritual life, like all others, can only be acquired ordinarily by knowledge of its first principles, that is, of the virtues of which it is composed and of the motive power of these virtues, and they require, in order to be acquired and practised, a more or less long apprenticeship and sometimes heroic efforts. We have, then, need of "someone to instruct us in this science, to keep us in the right way, to save us from wasting our time in finding out what others have learnt before, to hold us back when we are inclined to follow those will-o'-the-wisps which lead us to our ruin; to teach us to observe, to work, to gain experience, to control the results obtained, to correct our faults and to encourage us when we are weary. . . . To walk alone is impossible; to desire to do so shows a want of humility, and a lack of this virtue stops all progress, even in a purely moral career. Besides, experience has shown that a soul without a director ends by falling into merely external and fruitless formalities."[17]

The moral necessity of direction, for development of our interior life, appears, then, to be an incontestable truth: the authority and practice of the Church, the teaching of the Saints and Doctors, as well as the manifest need of souls, constitute a rule from which it would be rash for us to depart without a serious motive.

A writer of authority has said "that if so few souls arrive at perfection and contemplation, it may be

[16] Cf. Cassien, Conf. II, Ch. II; Godinez, *Praxis Theologiæ Mysticæ*, ib. VIII, C. 1.
[17] Faber, *op. cit.*

attributed to the scarceness of good spiritual directors, who are, after the grace of God, the pilots to guide souls in the unknown waters of the spiritual life."[18]

At the same time we must beware of exaggeration. Practically confession brings with it, more or less, spiritual direction. The counsel and encouragement of confessors are intended, not only to withdraw us from sin, but even more to incite us to virtue; to go on to something better, even to perfection. Further, "God is faithful," as the Apostle says. He will always give the necessary grace to purify and raise up a soul of good will, who desires to advance in virtue; He will do for its perfection what He has already done for its salvation. He will work a miracle rather than let it go astray, and if an external guide be wanting, He will Himself supply the interior light.

"When none can be found capable of giving instruction and guidance," says S. Vincent Ferrer, "then the divine mercy itself supplies this need for all who go to God with a humble and fervent heart."[19]

III. *Qualifications for Direction, or Necessary Dispositions if it is to be Fruitful*

Direction, as we have said, is very useful if made under the right conditions. Before finishing this treatise, it will be well to point them out; our remarks have reference in particular to those souls only who seek in direction light and support.

[18] Godinez, *op. cit.*
[19] *Traité de la Vie Spirituelle*, Ch. IV.

Spiritual authors usually point out four needful qualifications; respect, confidence or full manifestation of heart, docility and constancy.

We can understand the need of these dispositions when we remember that the director is for the soul, the instrument or the intermediary of God. It is God Himself, or our Lord Jesus Christ, whom we must see in him. "My daughter," said our Lord to Marie Lataste, "your director is a priest, he takes My place, he acts as I should act, he has My power. You should, therefore, regard Me as living in him; you should honour Me in honouring him, you should respect Me in respecting him, listen to My voice when hearing him, submit to Me in giving up your will to him; you should feel towards him the most sincere gratitude, you should love him as the spiritual father of your soul, as your guide and counsellor and Saviour, because he fulfils in your regard the office of Saviour which I have communicated to him, as to all my priests."[20] S. Paul said the same thing when he spoke of himself as the "ambassador of Christ" (2 *Cor.* v. 20). All our duties towards the director arise from this fact.

(1) *Respect* should be shown to the director because he is the representative of God, endowed with His authority in all that is most intimate and holy. This respect raises him above the level of a man—he must be regarded not merely as a man, but, as S. Francis of Sales says, as an angel given by God, or rather as Jesus Christ Himself, whose interests he forwards.[21] This respect should be

[20] *La Vie et les Œuvres de Marie Lataste,* published by M. l' Abbé Pascal Darbin, V, III. *Lettres Doctrinales,* letter II, p. 283 (2nd edition).

[21] *Introduction à la Vie Dévote,* I, Ch. IV.

accompanied by a simple and cordial *affection*, that of a son for his father. Attachment to a director is not to be condemned, indeed, if formed by grace, inspired by gratitude and well-merited confidence. Without mental reservation, it excludes any desire of particular friendship and the small jealousies which follow. Affection will keep the supernatural character it should have, if it is strong and sweet, altogether holy and sanctified, divine and spiritual.[22]

(2) *Confidence* also should be shown to him, that is, a wholly filial confidence, joined to great openness of heart. Respect, indeed, should not hinder self-surrender and openness, which are equally necessary.

We can easily understand this necessity. The end of all direction is, in fact, to restrain from evil and to encourage in good. To do this, the director must know the evil to which the soul has already fallen a prey, or to which it is inclined, also the good of which it is capable, and which God asks of it. He cannot know these two things before we open to him the interior of our hearts. Therefore the rule is, that in matters which concern the soul and supernatural things, there must be in us no secrets hidden from the director.

"Take counsel with him with open soul, in all sincerity and fidelity," writes S. Francis of Sales, "manifesting to him clearly all your good and evil without pretence or dissimulation; by this means your good will be more inquired into and more looked after, and your evil corrected and remedied;

[22] *Ibid.* On attachment to the director. Cf. S. Theresa, *Chemin de la Perfection,* Ch. IV; Bossuet, *Lettre à Sœur Cornuau.*

you will be gladdened and strengthened in your trials, and moderated and regulated in your consolations."[23]

And this is the way in which respect and confidence should go hand in hand in the soul directed. "Have in him (the director) great confidence, blended with devout reverence, in such wise that the reverence shall not diminish the confidence, or the confidence hinder the reverence; confide in him with the respect due to a father from a daughter, respect him as a child respects its mother."[24]

This openness of soul demands clearly great *simplicity*. "Have a heart of crystal," says a spiritual writer; "fear one thing only, not to be sufficiently known to your director." "How I desire," cries P. Lallemant, "to hold my interior in my hands in order to show it you as it is." S. Chantal required from her daughters a simple and childlike confidence: "such fills Paradise with religious souls," she said. S. Francis of Sales also asked the Sisters of the Visitation to open their soul simply and fully, showing all its inner secrets with the same sincerity and candour as a child shows its mother its scratches, or boils, or the stings of a wasp.[25]

(3) *Docility* towards the director is the most important and urgent of the dispositions required of one directed. The authority of God Himself is represented by the authority of the director, to the soul who has chosen him, therefore it must be humble, discreet and wholly submissive in all that concerns spiritual advancement.

[23] S. Francis of Sales, *Introd. à la Vie Dévote*, Ch. IV.
[24] *Ibid.*
[25] Quoted in *La Direction* by the author of the *Paillettes d'Or*, p. 294.

Here we may make one or two remarks.

The director is not a superior in the canonical sense of the word; consequently his authority has not the same force: it is not universal and does not oblige in virtue of obedience. Nevertheless we must not lose sight of the fact that direction should, before all things, ensure liberty of spirit. The obedience due to a director is not of constraint; in submitting to him the soul does not lose her liberty, and in obeying she remains free.

The soul remains always her own mistress. The director was chosen freely and he can in no wise restrain liberty; but by this choice the soul has lessened her chances of error and consequently increased her true liberty, because submitting with her whole heart to her guide, she can walk more securely and easily towards the goal, which is sanctity and God.

"I should not mind," said La Bruyère, "giving my confidence to a reasonable person and being governed by him in all things, absolutely and always. I should be sure of being right without having to reflect; I should enjoy the tranquillity of one who is governed by reason."[26]

It is with these restrictions that we must understand the words of Saints and spiritual writers on the question of obedience to a director. If sometimes we find among their writings such expressions as the following: "Do not discuss what I tell you; act, and I will be responsible for you"—expressions which seem to point to an entire surrender of liberty, it is because they are addressed to the *scrupulous*, poor troubled, hesitating souls, not knowing which way to turn. When it is a question of these, there

[26] La Bruyère, *Les Charactères*, Ch. IV.

is no occasion to respect their liberty. They are sick and need healing. The only advice to give them is to submit their will wholly to an enlightened guide and to obey blindly, like a sick man who swallows a dose of medicine, the efficacy of which he does not know.

(4) *Constancy or fidelity* towards the director chosen.

" Having obtained him (the director), bless this Divine Majesty; be satisfied and seek none other; going thus simply, humbly and confidently, you will make a prosperous voyage."[27]

This voyage of the spiritual life requires, in very truth, unity of view, perseverance in effort, a certain stability of mind and will which alone can insure unity and stability in direction from without.

That is why Fr. Faber is not afraid to affirm that " speaking in a general way it is a bad thing to change one's director. Especially as the reasons given more often than not to justify the change savour of frivolity, vanity, a certain sensuality, etc., and only tend to make the evil worse."[28]

This rule, however, like all others, admits of exceptions; there are cases in which a change of director is a good thing; also if he himself for good reasons desires the change. These will naturally vary with different souls and circumstances;[29] a good reason, always valid if judiciously interpreted, is given by Fr. Faber. " Spiritual directions should be free as air and fresh as the rising sun. . . . The one, only and invariable end of spiritual direction in all stages of the interior and mystical life is *liberty*

[27] S. Francis of Sales, *Int. à la Vie Dévote*, Part I, Ch. IV.
[28] *Op. cit.*
[29] Cf. F. Faber, *op. cit.*

of spirit. The opposite doctrine belongs not to the wisdom but to the superstition of direction."[30]

Let us conclude with the words of P. Schram: "Though it is best in the ordinary way to confide in one director, there is no need to be irrevocably attached to him; one ought to be sufficiently indifferent in his regard to be able to do without him; to be free to consult another, or even to change him if need be."

Such it seems to us is the traditional idea of direction. Given these guarantees and adorned with these qualities, it is and remains what it should be, purely supernatural; moreover, it is a pledge of security and of progress for the soul that makes use of it.

[30] *Op. cit.*

CONCLUSION

A STUDY of the foregoing pages leads us to this certain conclusion: the spiritual life as revealed by faith and theology is great with the greatness of God Himself. Divine in its foundation, the very essence of the spiritual life turns towards intimate union with God and is directed and ordered to that end. This end is accomplished even on earth, in an ineffable degree; for God dwells in the just to whom He gives Himself that they may know Him, love Him, and rejoice in Him. He comes to each one and inaugurates in the soul that life of intimacy and joy which will expand fully, one day, in heaven.

As a sinner, man is far from God, wandering far from Him in the ways of unlikeness. But directly he leaves "the shades of death," he receives, with the infusion of grace, the Spirit of love sent to him to seal the pact of reconciliation, to work with him in the work of his sanctification, and to become, in him, the efficient principle of the new life which he is to live, and which is incomparably superior to that of nature. Henceforth, there is continuous collaboration between the justified soul and the Holy Spirit; it is not merely for a passing visit that He comes, but to make His abode there with the Father and the Son.

In coming He gives Himself, who is His own

greatest gift. Then He renders the soul worthy of the Guest it entertains; He adorns and beautifies it as a temple in which He is pleased to dwell. He purifies it from all stains by the sanctifying grace with which He endows it, removing from it every stain, justifying, transforming and deifying it. But grace does not enter alone. It is accompanied by a cortège of virtues and supereminent qualities; at once aids for our faculties and sources of supernatural activity: these are the infused virtues, theological and moral, and the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Thus provided for, the soul can go forward on its journey towards the eternal shores. Its road is traced out: it has but to walk in the footsteps of Christ, who is the *Way* which leads to God. He goes before, calling by the attraction of His Sacred Humanity, encouraging by His example, strengthening by the graces acquired at the price of His life and death, which He distributes lavishly. The soul is aided, too, by the Blessed Virgin, Mother of Grace and Universal Mediatrix, bright Star whose sweet rays bring hope, confidence, and love. To arrive securely and happily at the goal, it has but to receive the inspirations of the Holy Spirit, and these are not long in coming. From the depths of His Being, the Holy Spirit enlightens the understanding, warms the heart, urges and encourages in good by the holy thoughts He inspires, by the good desires and holy resolutions He arouses, and of which He is the source.

How can we conceive the indifference of so many for the riches offered them in profusion? Called to life, they persist in the way of death; heirs of inexhaustible treasures, they pass them by without

even a glance, or reject them with carelessness, if not with contempt. O the mystery of human ignorance and ingratitude!

But, above all, how comes it that so many Christians possessing habitually, together with grace, the divine energy which accompanies it, are yet so feeble and so slack in God's service, so wanting in zeal for perfection, so given to earthly things, so forgetful of heaven, and so inclined to evil?

The first reason is found without doubt, in the too frequent resistance with which they oppose the action of the Holy Spirit and which paralyses His work. The spiritual life is an enterprise undertaken by two; it is the work of God and of the soul. To fulfil it perfectly, the workers should act in concert. The Holy Spirit is always ready; if the task fails, it is because the soul hangs back and so escapes the fruitful influence of its divine Collaborator.

Another reason is that many do not know the life which is dormant within them, the treasure deposited with them; others hold it in little esteem and go to no pains to make it fruitful. Without giving up their heritage, they bury it deep and condemn it to sterility.

It was to such Christians as these that S. Leo the Great addressed his famous apostrophe: "*Know, O Christian, thy dignity.*"

In order to live the spiritual life fully, we must love it, and in order to love it, we must understand its greatness and dignity; this is a concrete application of the old scholastic adage: *nihil amatum quin præcognitum.*

From the favour with which ascetical and mystical publications are received in our day, it appears that the faithful have begun to understand this. It is a

happy sign of the times, among so many other signs that are less good. God grant that this spiritual renewal may increase and develop on the lines of strict orthodoxy. Then perhaps we may see a new efflorescence of Christian life, similar to that known in past ages, which will recall to a worn-out and blasé world that " the Kingdom of God is always in the midst of us."

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